BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY

Screenplay by Oliver Stone

From the book by Ron Kovic

Property of

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EXT. SALLY'S WOODS - DAY (1955)

1. THE SUN...DAY...leafy orange October WOODS...

A FACE, etched in a broad sunburst, calling from a tree.

VOICE
Ronnie....Ronnie?

the last "Ronnie" drawn out, slowing down...suggesting something mystical, now burning out into the sun as

RONNIE looks, hears it, crouched - a stubby crewcut, knees patched with denim, his plastic gun in hand, an intense glow of beauty to his face; he is 9 years old, dark, big black eyes, a monkey-like agility, relieved as:

TIMMY runs up - red-headed, freckles, small and vulnerable in a clumsy crouch, a GI helmet on his head, gun.

RONNIE
D'you hear it?

TIMMY
What?

Ronnie doesn't answer. He wonders, then forgets as he HEARS legs tearing through bush fast. Loud FX. Starts, looks:

EXT. VIET (RON'S HIT) - DAY (1968)

2. MARINES moving through a thick wood - FAST, running from something; bush hats on, light gear...

EXT. SALLY'S WOODS - DAY (1955)

3. RONNIE and TIMMY up and moving FAST across trees and tangle; an extended OVERHEAD TRACK drawing out the tension as:

INSECTS BUZZ louder...louder.

EXT. VIET (RON'S HIT) - DAY (1968)

4. FLASH - MARINE moving, stopping, then:

ATTACK SCREAM!

carrying over:

GUNFIRE from a FIGURE up in a tree and:

RON
Timmy! Watch out!

RONNIE runs to help his friend but too late as

EXT. SALLY'S WOODS - DAY (1955)

5. A HUGE DIRTBOMB thuds with loud FX on the chest of TIMMY who SCREAMS as

6. RONNIE spins, terrified and:

EXT. VIET (RON'S HIT) - DAY (1968)

7. RONNIE the marine falls - shot in the heel. FLASH

EXT. SALLY'S WOODS - DAY (1955)

8. A HUGE FIGURE hurtles down out of the tree, smacking the ground hard - painted face, sweat, a crown of thorns...

TWO MORE BOYS - JOEY WALSH and TOMMY FINELLI follow, thudding to the ground, yelling war cries.

RONNIE, fallen to the ground, scrambles to get his gun up but FLASH

STEVIE is right on top of him, digging his gun right into Ronnie's face...he is a big frightening 9 year old and has rigged himself a crown of spindly acorns and thorns which are wrapped tight around his ears; and he has blackened his cheekbones in a child's version of an Indian or guerrilla warrior, and in an added touch of the macabre, blackened all his teeth which now shine in a twisted mouth of cruelty and certainty:

STEVIE
You're DEAD and you know it!

RONNIE looking up into that face as:

NOISE!!!!

STEVIE blasts his gun into Ronnie's face at point blank range.

STEVIE (OVER)
(shouting)
Ronnie's dead!

Ronnie - looking up...

HIGH ANGLES - THE WOODS - voice carrying...again

"Ronnie's dead!"....dead!

cut

EXT. '55 MASSAPEQUA PARADE - NIGHT

9. BOOM! - the huge sound of a BASS DRUM as

9. CONT.

A NUBILE BLONDE with big cowboy boots and gigantic boobs and long blonde hair BEATS her drum and

HORNS! MUSIC! and the BAND (marked the "Massapequa Long Island High School Marching Band") tears into John Phillip Sousa and it's the Fourth of July Night and

10. WHACK WHACK WHACK! The firecrackers blast off in red, white, blue. An artillery attack over Massapequa and

RONNIE rides the shoulders of his DAD in a TRACKING SHOT along the crowd, framed in such a way that we have the impression Ronnie is floating above the crowd, ecstatic, waving his little red, white, and blue flag up at the crackers - the greatest night of his life.

RONNIE
Daddy, look at the firecrackers! Look!

ANOTHER ANGLE - DAD is muscular, stocky, a kind face, late 30's, thinning hair, looking up too:

DAD
Hey look at that!

In the confusion of the crowd, now coming astride MOM - a handsome Irish woman, pregnant, with a somewhat tired face, slightly pinched - also waving a flag. With her 2 YOUNGER SONS and a DAUGHTER, 8. TOMMY, 5, is pulling on DAD's arm, jumping up and down.

TOMMY
Lemme up there Daddy - it's my turn!

RONNIE
(fierce)
No, today's my birthday!...you be quiet.

MOM
(reaching out)
Come here Tommy.

Ronnie looking out from his perch at

11. A FLOAT OF AMERICANA (marked Massapequa USA) motoring down Broadway. Young TEENAGERS populate it like strawberries. Followed by:

12. THE NASSAU COUNTY MOTORCYCLE COPS - gleaming chrome and black leather, the scouts doing wheelies on the back tires of their machines - crowd APPLAUSE.

13. A DUMPY GIRL, 14, in a tee shirt and Bermudas chases her younger brother, BILLY VORSOVICH, 8, through the FIRE-TRUCKS AND FIREMEN, parading by.

CATCHES HIM and spanks him hard on the sidewalk.

GIRL
What's the matter with you don't ya ever listen!

The younger brother has the sullen pork eyes of the perpetual loser in these quarrels. He is very fat, a pause, awkward. The SISTER slaps him up again on the side of the head.

GIRL
Answer me!

He stares stupidly at her, as if saying 'hit me again' as

THE CLOWNS dance by behind and a little 9 year old GIRL (DONNA) whips up, stops, runs off again, chased by her FATHER.

FATHER
Donna! Come back here...

14. THE DOVES parade by in white uniforms - the wifery of one of the male organizations.

15. THE JUVENILE DELINQUENTS, 14-17, of Massapequa look on, at an alienated distance, huddled with their CHICKS near a couple of souped-up convertibles, pointing and smirking at:

16. THE TOWN POLITICIANS in their cars waving.

17. TIMMY, dressed up in a Navy uniform, ducks and dodges through the crowd, chased by

STEVIE, in an Army uniform with a COLLIE running and barking at his side - nearly bowling over an OLD LADY who goes "watch out!" and a FAT WOMAN goes "oooooh!" and we sense the mad physical assault inherent in a crowd at close quarters, pushing shoving smothering.

RONNIE in their midst, with awe:

RONNIE
Look Daddy - the soldiers!

18. THE VETERANS now march (30)...in full uniforms of World War 1, 2, and young proud ones fresh out of Korea.

A BUGLER playing. Some of the men in World War 2 uniforms are riding around at the front of the group in little miniature cars. A banner: Veterans of Foreign Wars... many of them carrying rifles at shoulder arms. A DRUM-BEAT is muffled in the near distance, a peculiar glow around these men...the faces of times, of old wars in distant places, almost forgotten now, of....

19. WIDOWS who watch...and the CROWD is slightly quieter now.

20. TOMMY FINELLI and JOEY WALSH, from the woods, hold their toy rifles at shoulder arms, like their fathers. Whispering.

21. THE TOWN DRUNK salutes.

22. WIVES of the veterans, hurrying along smiling with the procession, hand out tiny American flags to the crowd. INTERSECTING the little 9 year old GIRL (DONNA) who is looking for something, a wrapped gift under her arm. She is adorable in a little pleated skirt and a white sweater with a flower tucked in her blonde pigtails; skirting the people's hips with agility, she intersects a GIRLFRIEND who whispers fiercely in her ear.

GIRLFRIEND
Stevie Boyer just gave Mary Barnett a ring! Can you believe it....

Donna whispering something back (unheard)

GIRLFRIEND
(pointing)
Over there!

Donna hurrying off, nervously looking over her shoulder for her Dad as the DISABLED VETERANS pass behind her - at the tail end of the Veterans. Men on crutches, in wheelchairs.

EXT. '55 MASSAPEQUA PARADE (DONNA'S GIFT) - DUSK

23. A VETERAN - WW 2 - rolls by in an electric wheelchair; he has one glass eye which now moves towards

RONNIE, now highlighted from a lower angle over his DAD by 1-2-3 fast background explosions of red white blue. Hold. The moment broken by

DONNA running up, extending her gift wrapped package, excited.

23. CONT.

DONNA
Happy Birthday, Ronnie Kovic!

RON surprised, as his DAD hauls him down to the ground.

RONNIE
For me?

DONNA
Yes. Open it!

He takes it shyly as his MOM notices.

MOM
Isn't that nice of you Donna.
Say thank you Ronnie.

RONNIE
(still surprised)
T'anks. But....

His BROTHERS huddle around him, now joined by STEVIE running up with TIMMY.

STEVIE
What is it, open it willya!

DONNA frowning at the interruption by the boys.

DONNA
Leave him alone!

RONNIE opening the box.

RONNIE
Boy...wow!

STEVIE
(in awe)
It's the real thing...feel that!

RONNIE slipping a real $10 New York Yankees striped blue wool hat over his head with the reverence of a priest handling the crucifix...his eyes peering up from underneath trying to assuage the impact.

TIMMY
(hushed tones)
Just like Mickey Mantle Ronnie.

DAD snaps him up on the side of the head affectionately.

23. CONT.

DAD
(to Mom)
Ain't he a little 4th of July firecracker in that hat.

Ronnie beaming, proud, surrounded by his gang, but looking over at

DONNA who now motions with her head - come on. Slyly.

RONNIE, curious, sensing something new and important, disentangles himself from his FRIENDS whose attention is immediately engaged by a CLOWN dancing up - and goes up to DONNA. Her lips glowing moist with a mischievous hint of lipstick.

DONNA
Let's sneak out.

RON
(surprised)
What?.....where?

DONNA
Secret.

Ron looking back, worried if his parents see him.

RON
Mom'll....

DONNA
Come on - it's your birthday.

Takes his hand firmly. Runs him off - as Roman Candles explode above. They run down the street hand in hand, whip around the corner. Firecracker in b.g....

24. & 25. OMIT

EXT. SIDE STREET - MASSAPEQUA

26. DONNA leads RONNIE into the mouth of an alley. The parade is seen off in b.g. She thrusts her face into his.

DONNA
Kiss me!

RONNIE
What?

DONNA
It's your birthday. Kiss me.

26. CONT.

RONNIE
How?

DONNA
Haven't you ever seen your parents do it?

RONNIE
No.

DONNA
Like this.

She buries her mouth on his.

RONNIE - a face of disgust mixed with puzzlement, a hint of fear, loss - should it feel good or should it feel bad? Glad to be distracted.

RONNIE
Hey, the clowns! Let's go see.

27. THE CLOWNS prancing down the avenue...

28. DONNA grips HIM as he tries to move off. MUSIC THEME, UP.

DONNA
Silly!

Kisses him. He resists...then lets it flow.

dissolve

29. EXT. KOVIC BACKYARD/PORCH - NIGHT (1955)

CLOSE on RONNIE's face looking up in wonder at the NIGHT.

VOICE
Look, right there! You see it?

VOICE 2
Where?

VOICE 3
I see it!

VOICE 2
Yeah...yeah! Look Sputnik, Mom!

30. THE FAMILY huddled together in the BACKYARD, silent - DAD stroking the coals on the barbecue -

30. CONT.

VOICE 1
It's so small.....

VOICE 2
...so high...

31. A SPECK OF LIGHT moving through - the Russian Sputnik, the MUSIC THEME EDGING IN.

32. MOVING DOWN the FAMILY FACES - BABY BROTHER (BILLY), 3.

BILLY
Oooooooh....look mommy the Russian plane.

MOVING UP TO MOM, with a new little BABY SISTER (JAN), 1, in her lap, making ga-ga noises.

MOM
It's not a plane sweetheart, it's a satellite.

BILLY
(hushed, mispronounced)
Satellite?

MOVING TO TOMMY, 5 - looking up awed. MOVING TO MAGGIE, 8.

MAGGIE
(awed)
"A satellite" -

MOVING TO RON watching, silent. Then:

RONNIE
Dad?

DAD VOICE
Hm?

RONNIE
Why is it Russian - the satellite?

MOVING TO DAD feeding the charcoals - a glow on his face.

DAD
Well, the Russians, they don't even bother feeding their people, they put all their money into things like that...

32. CONT.

RONNIE
But you always said America was the greatest country in the world, Dad! and...

DAD
You bet we are but we've been pretty stupid too. We put them back on their feet after World War II and they took Czechoslovakia, Poland and half of Europe - and they still want more. They want the whole world to be Communist -

MOM
- And pretty soon it will be the way they run this country down in Washington.

RONNIE looking up again, upset, feeling the defeat, the sense of helplessness.

TOMMY (OVER)
What's Czechoslovakia?

MOM (OVER)
That's where your gramma comes from.

MAGGIE (OVER)
Gramma Kovassovich?

RONNIE
But don't the people in Washington know that....why don't they stop them, why don't they do something about it!

DAD
They're scared...I think everybody's scared of them these days -

Ronnie looking up -

RONNIE
I'm not. I'm not scared of them.

Turning back to the house, angry -

RONNIE
I hate the Communists. I really hate them.

33., 34., 35., 36. OMIT

INT. MASSAPQUA MOVIE HOUSE - NIGHT (1960)

37. INSIDE a large Romanesque MOVIE HOUSE - John Wayne in THE SANDS OF IWO JIMA, saying something to a scared young recruit about the Marine Corps and its long tradition... 'You're screwing up my Marine Corps kid - "

38. THE BALCONY - MOVING DOWN the FACES, we see STEVIE setting the pace smothering his DATE with kisses...TOMMY FINELLI trying to keep up, less successfully with his DATE...JOEY WALSH, smiling awkwardly at his DATE as she glances at him...TIMMY terrified, glancing at his DATE, a skinny rat-like genius type with large horn rims evidently irritated at the hand trying to clutch her shoulder...and RONNIE, now 14, totally absorbed in the action on the screen as DONNA glances at him, wondering. X

THEIR KNEES bump and Ronnie's knee jerks away as if hit by a fastball...

RONNIE uncomfortably glances at her.

DONNA slides her hand downwards

TAKES HIS HAND - they hold.

DONNA looks over.

RONNIE looks back - background MUSIC and ARTILLERY from the screen mount. His attention distracted. His face changing.

HIS HAND slides off her hand as

SHE looks over. Why?

39. CLIP - JOHN WAYNE is leading the charge up Surabachi at the end of the film....he is hit!

40. THE FIVE BOYS all watching now, even Stevie; the FIVE GIRLS with varying degrees of interest.

TIMMY
(leans over, whispers to RON)
Hey Ronnie, aren't you sorry you missed World War II?

41. WAYNE is dying, speaking...speaking to

42. RONNIE, his face lost in the light of the flickering screen, a private world, mysterious - a child's fantasy, fascination with violence, with death...the secret love for a nightmare...WAYNE dies, OVER.

43. CLIP - THE FLAG is planted on Iwo Jima by the Marines in a reenaction of the famous photograph - accompanied

44. RONNIE has tears rolling out his eyes on the darkness.

cut

45. INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - DAY (1960)

CLOSE--BASKETBALL...FX as a little air is let out by a pair of HANDS, rendering it rubbery and pliable.

A PHOTO OF MARILYN MONROE on the wall, in between Ted Williams and Mickey Mantle...SOUNDS of heavy breathing, gyrating, sheets rubbing...MOVING over Ron's bedroom, miscelleaneous sports equipment haphazardly strewn along the dresser, weights...A CRUCIFIX affixed to a small MIRROR ("Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen In Me")...and a BED taking up most of the cramped little room, on which RON, slumped over the basket ball underneath him, peers at the 'Daily News" open on the pillow to the pin-up girl...

RONNIE
Oh God! I'm sorry for doing this... X
Please help me God - to stop.

Suddenly a BANGING on the door.

MOM VOICE
Ronnie?

Ronnie snaps up, buckling his pants.

MOM
Ronnie, what are you doing in there?

RONNIE
Uh - practicing my dribbling, Mom. An' I'm doing pretty good!

cut

46. OMIT

47. INT. KOVIC LIVING ROOM - DAY (1960)

MOVING SHOT - MOM chasing RONNIE through the LIVING ROOM with an egg turner in her hand...

MOM
Come here!

She looks older, more pinched. Five children and a lot of housework.

INT. KOVIC KITCHEN - DAY (1960)

48. INTO THE KITCHEN - cornering RONNIE before he can slip out the back door, she hits at him with the egg turner.

MOM
You're no good Ronnie, no good!

RONNIE
OW!

MOM
God's gonna punish you!

Whack!

EXT. MASSAPEQUA LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY (1960)

48A. THE PITCHER releases.

THE FASTBALL wings in with a conclusive THUD as RONNIE swings and misses.

UMPIRE
STEE - RIKE!!!!!

CHEERS from the stands - as RONNIE looks back at the pitcher in awe; this guy is fast!...Ronnie is wearing the New York Yankees hat, cleats, and a Number 7 uniform (in honor of Mickey Mantle). Stepping out of the batter's box to regain his composure. X

CATCHER
(throwing the ball back)
Okay - Jerry - two down, you got this guy! He's looking, he's looking.

VORSOVICH is the baserunner at third.

VORSOVICH
C'mon Ronnie - you got him, you got him, he's chopped meat.

STEVIE the third base coach, plumper, making all kinds of railroad gestures against his chest, at Ronnie.

STEVIE
(unintelligible)
Oh yeah godzagol gimme a ten blue, here we go here we go awright awright okay okay.

48A. CONT.

VOICE (OVER)
Shuddup you big lug of fat.

TIMMY the nervous baserunner at first base.

THE OPPONENTS' DUGOUT - all of them on their feet yelling encouragement at their pitcher, belittling Ronnie.

RONNIE'S DUGOUT - JOEY, FINELLI, FANTOZZI - everybody's up on his feet. A big moment in the Little League.

VOICES
C'mon c'mon Ronnie -- get a piece of it! Go! Go!

DONNA and a bunch of GIRLFRIENDS are up in the stands, licking ice cream - Donna leaning forward, intent. A radio is out - playing Del Shannon's "RUNAWAY."

"As I walk along
I wonder what went wrong
with our love
a love that was so strong...."

RONNIE nervously making all kinds of batter gestures outside the box...stepping in.

THE PITCHER looking for his sign, sweating - obviously a big moment.

RONNIE waiting -

THE PITCHER winds up....fires.

RONNIE in SLOW MOTION SILENCE swinging into it... connecting...

ANOTHER ANGLE - SOUND - THE BALL CRACKING off the bat... RON swinging through as

THE BALL sails out - all the heads in the ballpark upraised....gone!

THE CROWD cheers and yells - featuring DONNA screaming. ONE of her GIRLFRIENDS, disinterested, turns up her radio full blast on "RUNAWAY" over:

TIMMY crossing the plate.

RONNIE rounding third, slapped on by STEVIE...he runs on and the lyric seems to focus on him as he floats into the arms of his ENTIRE TEAM jumping up and down, engulfing him.

48A. CONT.

"I'm awalking in the rain
tears are falling
and I feel a pain
awishing you were here by me
to end this misery
and I wonder, I -
awhoo whoo whoo whoo
wonder why, why why
...why why

match dissolve to:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD (1964)

48B. RON now 18 years old slides into home plate. DONNA and team surround RON to congratulate him.

cut

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY (1964)

49. RONNIE, in wrestling gear with a very short haircut, is hauling ass up the ropes in a race with other young WRESTLERS.

COACH (OVER)
Go! Go! Go!

He touches the top, slides down -

COACH (OVER)
Again...Kovic! Keep going! You, Powell, you look like a girl!

And back up, in a vengeance.

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY (1964)

50. RONNIE AND OTHERS doing pushups on the mat as

THE BULL-NECKED COACH with crewcut and myopic eyes behind thick lenses barks -

COACH
You're sweating to win - to win!
I want that State Championship,
do you want that State
Championship...DO YOU!

ALL
(pumping)
YES SIR.

EXT. MASSAPEQUA PARK & LAKE - DAWN (1964)

51. RONNIE AND OTHERS running through the winter SNOW tumbling on MASSAPEQUA in sweatsuits, breathing clouds of air.

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY (1964)

52. RONNIE AND OTHERS working curls on the weights, the veins in his forehead standing out.

COACH
More, more!...drive your bodies.
If you wanna win, you gotta WORK...
you gotta SUFFER!

Slams RONNIE on the shoulder in the midst of his curl.

COACH
Right, 4th of July?

RONNIE
RIGHT!

INT. KOVIC KITCHEN - DAY (1964)

53. RONNIE, wearing a rubber sweat suit over 6 shirts and 4 pairs of pants, and gaunt now, is coming from the refrigerator in the KITCHEN with an apple and glass of juice in his hand - pausing and glancing silently at MOM, DAD, MAGGIE, JAN, and BILLY eating at the cramped table. MOM looks at him pleadingly, lovingly, over meat loaf, steaming mashed potatoes, homemade biscuits, squash with melted cheese, iced tea.

RONNIE walks out of the kitchen.

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY (1964)

54. RONNIE drenched in sweat, is clinched with a wiry OPPONENT with "BABYLON" written on his top. Muscles bulging, armpits..

DONNA, now 17, long legs, hips, breasts, is cheerleading with 2 OTHER GIRLS in the packed little wrestling GYM.

DONNA
(intent)
Go Ronnie, get him, kill him!

MOVING TO:

MOM AND DAD rooting in the stands and

THE COACH nervously pacing the sideline looking up at the clock and scoreboard.

54. CONT.

COACH
Come on Kovic, get in there!

BOYS
(on bench)
Go, Ronnie, go!

BABYLON 3, MASSAPEQUA 2 - 1 MINUTE ticking off.

RONNIE strains, grunts - springs out of the lock and reverses his OPPONENT. CHEERS sweep the room.

DONNA AND THE CHEERLEADERS - yelling "hold him!...hold him now!"...an erotic allure to the wrestlers, the girls not conscious as they lick their lips, breathe in hot spurts, grab each other in tension, vicariously sharing.

DONNA
(leaning close to the ground)
You got him! You got him!

THE OPPONENT bucks grunting - a wild spin and

TWO HEADS bang into the mat as RONNIE rides him still, locking him down in a nelson...YELLS

THE CLOCK ticking out - 4...3...2...1 - MASSAPEQUA 4 BABYLON 3.

PANDEMONIUM

RONNIE tottering, his hand stretched upwards by the referee in a victory pose - but he is so weak and faded looking, on the verge of vomiting, that his victory seems pyrrhic, based more in sacrifice, in self-denial than anything else.

cut

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL HALL - DAY (1964)

55. RONNIE walking down the HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR with books in hand

APPROACHING A GROUP OF GIRLS who stop talking, looking at him...one of the GIRLS, her hesitation overcome by some inwardly propelling force, stepping out and almost into RON...she wants terribly to reach out and touch his chest, his shoulders, but the hand hangs there...

55. CONT.

GIRL
I....I just want....
(breaks)
you're terrific!

And reaches over quickly and plants a kiss on his cheek ...he reddens, shy. Not knowing what to say, nods and mumbles 'thanks...thanks', walks on...MOVING WITH HIM, seeing his secret face - shy but so terribly happy.

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY (1964)

56. VOICE
ATTEN - SHUN!

cut

SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - 70 senior high school BOYS all rise in one loud FX as

TWO MARINES in full dress blue uniforms and magnificently spit-shined shoes execute a perfect close order two man drill down the middle of the aisle on the way to the platform.

MARINE SGT.
(barking)
TEXT - CLOSE ORDER DRILL.

MARINE SGT. addressing the SENIOR STUDENTS from the podium - Marine Corps flag, U.S. flag, table of materials; SCHOOL OFFICIALS behind.

MARINE SGT.
(polite, very dignified)
Good afternoon - I'm Staff Sergeant Hayes and this is Sergeant Bowers, the United States Marine Recruiting Station, Levittown, New York. We've come here today at the request of your principal, Mr. O'Connor, and members of the faculty to tell you a little bit about the Marine Corps ...First of all, young men, let's get one thing straight...
(thrusting out his finger)
Not <u>everybody</u> can become United States Marines. We want the best and we will settle for nothing but the best because there is nothing prouder, nothing finer, nothing standing as straight as a United States Marine...

56. CONT.

PROFILE - JOEY, TIMMY, RONNIE, BILLY VORSOVICH, DANNY FANTOZZI, STEVIE BOYER - Ronnie all absorbed, buying every word.

MARINE SGT. (OVER)
Now they got the Air Force, they got the Navy, they got the Army, they got the Coast Guard - and if you want to join them go ahead. They got plenty of room.

MARINE SERGEANT -

MARINE SGT.
But if you want a challenge, if you want to try something difficult, try to achieve the impossible - try 13 weeks of hell at Parris Island South Carolina and find out if you got what it takes, find out if you really are a man, then the Marines might be what you're looking for.

EXT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (1964)

57. OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM - ACROSS A CAMPUS LAWN - MUSIC THEME - Spring - the onrushing force - in one sense melodic, stirring, in another rushing, pulling, sucking Ronnie from his youth, pushing him on into manhood. Dappled sunlight like a Seurat impression, whirring bugs flashing through the air...DONNA AND GIRLS in spring dresses, shorts, sneakers are predominant, strolling, doing gymnastic tumbles on the lawn, others in far background peeking into the windows of the auditorium and running off, giggling.

MARINE SGT. VOICE (OVER)
(distant)
Tarawa...Iwo Jima...Belleau Wood. We have never lost a war. We have always come when our country has called....

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY (1964)

58. INSIDE AUDITORIUM - RONNIE eyes like 'god, yeah!'

SPIT SHINED SHOES....MOVING UP THE STRIPED PANTS - TO

MARINE SGT.
Now Sergeant Bowers and I are gonna open this up for questions. Any of
(MORE)

58. CONT.

MARINE SGT. (contd)
you young men have questions go ahead and raise your hands.

SILENCE

SERGEANT

MARINE SGT.
Now come on, don't be afraid. Don't forget a good Marine is a thinking Marine.

STEVIE making a cynical face, at DANNY, BILLY.

MARINE SGT. (OVER)
Stand up...stand up back there, young man.

A PIMPLY KID with glasses hesitating, getting up at the back of the auditorium.

KID
How old do you have to be to join the Marines?

MARINE SGT. - quick.

MARINE SGT.
18 years old - but with your parents' consent you can join at 17.

Looking around. Pointing.

BILLY VORSOVICH standing, adjacent RONNIE, OTHERS -

BILLY
(proud)
Billy Vorsovich, sir! - when do I get to wear a uniform like you?

MARINE SGT.

MARINE SGT.
Make PFC out of boot camp, you can be wearing this thing in 13 weeks ...any of you young men have any more questions, come up to the stage. Sergeant Bowers and I will be here to answer any questions. Thank you, gentlemen.

cut

INT. BOYERS CANDY STORE - DAY (1964)

59. RONNIE, STEVIE, TIMMY, JOEY, BILLY, DANNY finishing their sodas in a booth of the candy store -

RONNIE
I'd like to be those guys. They're tough!

STEVIE
Crap, all of it's crap!

JOEY
You think so.

TIMMY
My brother's at college at Stony Brook, he says there's gonna be a war over there soon in....

RONNIE
Vyet - Nam

TIMMY
Yeah, but it ain't gonna last long he says. The Marines are gonna be the first one in too.

RONNIE
We don't sign up we're gonna miss it. I'm going in now, not September.

STEVIE
You're crazy!

RONNIE
No. You don't know what you're missing. It's gonna be part of history.

TIMMY
I always wanted to be a Marine. The Marines are cool, man. Faggots go to college.

JOEY
I don't know. Marines are crazy. Pop says go into the army, it's the same money - and it's safer.

RONNIE
Imagine going all the way across the ocean - to Asia?

59. CONT.

STEVIE
I can't see it. I once shot a bird man. It really felt weird. You should think about it.

TIMMY
Where you going - college?

STEVIE
Yeah I think it makes a lot more sense. Get a degree in business administration. Learn a little about marketing.

TIMMY
Yeah?

JOEY
Mom wants me to go to college.

DANNY
They're bugging me too.

RONNIE
(to Stevie)
Yeah but you don't think you don't need warriors?

TIMMY
(to Stevie)
Yeah, don't you care about anything but yourself?

RONNIE
They got Sputniks. They're moving in all around us...in Cuba. They're 90 miles away.

STEVIE
No, all I'm saying is you should think about it, you know - just think about it.

Timmy mock snores.

X

TIMMY
You couldn't make it as a soldier anyway, you're a little overweight.

59. CONT.

STEVIE
Laugh. Wait till you get over there and they're shooting at you.

RONNIE
Yeah - I wonder what they look like.

STEVIE
Who?

RONNIE
The Communists.

JOEY
They're red.

RONNIE
They're red?

Laughs.

STEVIE
Who cares?
(rising to leave)
Check's on me, Dad. I'll work it out later okay?

DAD
Okay, Stevie.

TIMMY
He'll work it out all right.

STEVIE
(burping)
Hey Ronnie, who you taking to the prom?

All of them going out.

RONNIE
Uh....Roseanne Lombardi.

STEVIE
Who?

RONNIE
(lying)
She doesn't live here, she's over in Farmingdale.

STEVIE
I got Wendy Kesten coming with me.

EXT. BOYERS CANDY STORE & STREET - DAY (1964)

60. LONG SHOT - THE GROUP coming out of the store - a sign "Boyer's Soda Fountain and Candy" - burger 60¢ sodas 35¢.

JOEY
Don't get your head stuck in those knockers.

STEVIE
Yeah - tits like a yoyo.

PAST SPARKY THE BARBER'S - an old barbershop pole with glass front and SPARKY cutting inside.

RONNIE
Hey Steve, I heard she killed a dog once and ate it..

JOEY
No. she ate it and then killed it.

Lot of laughter now at Stevie's expense.

BILLY
I hear she's got a ring in her nose. She's mean.

JOEY
She has hairy feet.

TIMMY
You guys are really gross!

Giggling, they pass on -

cut

INT. MASSAPEQUA A & P - DAY (1964)

61. INSIDE A & P SUPERMARKET, windows looking out on Broadway, Massapequa - RONNIE is hauling empty cartons down an aisle, intersecting his DAD who is a manager in the store, balding, early 50's now, in uniform.

DAD
Take those down to Section C and check the stock for more toilet paper.

RONNIE
Right -

Going. Evidently the job is wearying to him whereas his father is concentrated at it.

61. CONT.

MOVING DOWN a row of canned goods, RONNIE comes around the corner and suddenly sees

DONNA AND GIRLS at the magazine rack in the high school clothing of '64.

RONNIE is immediately hesitant, intersecting her awkwardly.

RONNIE
Hi Donna.

DONNA tries to seem casual, both of them self-conscious.

DONNA
Hi...

RONNIE
(standing there)
How's everything?

DONNA
Okay...heard you were going into the Marines next month?

RONNIE
Yeah...

DONNA
Gee, Ronnie that's great, Ronnie, that's really wonderful.

RONNIE
(a silly grin)
Well...it's better than carrying these boxes around.

DONNA
I guess you'll be gone a long time?

RONNIE
(shining)
Yeah - four years...like college ...heard you were going to Stony Brook in the Fall?

DONNA
Yeah...

RONNIE
(nods)
...Well I get leaves, you know. I'll be back in the Fall.

61. CONT.

DAD going past, joshing.

DAD
When the boss is away, the mice play.

RON
Yeah - who they playing with? I don't see no mice -

DONNA
Who are you taking to the prom?

RON
Nobody

DONNA
I heard you were taking somebody from Framingdale.

RON
Yeah...no...maybe....I don't go for those things - proms. Who you going with?

DON
Uh...Jed.

RONNIE
Oh - yeah. That's great. Jed's an interesting person...well

DONNA
Ronnie, if....
(doesn't say it)

RONNIE
Well. I'll see you round before I leave.

DONNA
Yeah -

Putting the magazines back as RONNIE walks off, noticing the stares of her GIRLFRIENDS - and going out.

TRACKING RONNIE as he comes to the stock room, looks back - she has gone. He goes in.

cut

EXT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT (1964)

62. RAIN pouring down on Massapequa - NIGHT

63. THE SENIOR PROM - OUTSIDE ANGLE. Lights, singing, dancing, cars. Early Beatles' music.

cut

INT. RON'S BEDROOM/HALL/BATH (1964)

64. RONNIE in his little room alone, hunched on his bed packing a carton with childhood mementoes, baseball photos, bats, gloves, the Yankee baseball hat Donna gave him...Mel Allen's VOICE on the radio getting more and more excited.

RADIO VOICE
Okay two down...Kubek on third, Richardson's leading far off the bag at first and Mantle's got two big strikes on him now with the Red Sox ahead 3 to 1 here in the bottom of the sixth...the windup now...the pitch...
(sharp FX of the baseball bat cracking)
THAT'S A HIT!...the Mick...wait! wait, it's going, going...it's GONE...over the centerfield fence, 455 feet, the Mick has hit it right out of the park and LOOK at that crowd!...on its feet and NUMBER 7 is coming round third base, his 491st home run,
isn't he great! I can't think of one man who means so much to the championship Yankees as Number 7....

RONNIE is shuffling out the door, barefoot...something of his childhood hanging in the air, but unable to feel the same emotions...despondent...

65. PASSING his BROTHERS' ROOM - TOMMY, half-glimpsed, 15, picking at a guitar string, singing a DYLAN lyric... "The Times They Are A Changing"...Billy listening.

66. DAD watching the television news in the LIVING ROOM; a newspaper in hand, dozing, exhausted from work. Waking now as RONNIE shuffles in, watching the

67. T.V. NEWS CLIP - an Infantry COLONEL is being interviewed at a base camp someplace, TROOPS moving or convoying in the background; he is a vigorous man, certain of himself, shades on his eyes, a green baseball cap over close-cropped hair, a revolver in his shoulder holster, thick forearms:

COLONEL
...no question 'bout that. The 82nd Airborne and the First Cavalry Division are the newest concepts in mobile warefare. One division is worth about 2-1/2 Russian and six Chinese divisions...

67. CONT.

NEWSMAN
But how well do you think the individual soldier will hold up in Vietnam, Colonel?

COLONEL
I've never seen anything like it. I been in World War II - in Korea, these boys - they're gung ho, they wanna eat nails - the finest combat troops we've ever had!

68. RONNIE has sat down facing his DAD. A pause between them.

RONNIE
What do you think, Dad - about that?

DAD
Oh...I don't know - 8000 miles - it's a long way to go to fight a war -

RONNIE
But if we give them Vietnam, they'll take the rest. That's the way they are. It's the domino theory. They'll nibble us up piece by piece. We gotta stop them.

DAD
(sighs)
Maybe...I just hope they send you to Europe or Korea or something.

RONNIE
They can't, Dad! They gotta send me to Vietnam for 13 months, that's the way it is -

DAD
Well, maybe they'll put you on garrison duty someplace ...an embassy?

COLONEL
...It's an honor to lead them.

NEWSCASTER
Do you think, Colonel, the war here will be over soon -

COLONEL
Well, that's a hard question to answer. But without being overconfident, I'd say at the outside, yes -- about a year - about a year - Course it's a guerilla war so you can't force...

NEWSCASTER
But do you think these people - the Viet Cong - who've fought the Japanese and the French and lived in these caves and tunnels for thirty years - do you really think Colonel...

COLONEL
I think anything that lives in a tunnel can be weeded out. It takes time and patience, and it takes the support of the people back home - and the support of the press -

68. CONT.

RONNIE
(angry now)
Yeah but they won't Dad! Every Marine has a tour over there, it's not the Army.

DAD
I know, Ronnie, I know.

ANOTHER ANGLE - DAD doesn't want to think about it, looks away. RONNIE deeper in frame is exasperated - this mute climate, this failure to beat a drum on the home front, this early silence and sadness about the war...

RONNIE
Ever since I've been a kid, Dad, I've wanted this, I've wanted to do something like this...I've wanted to help. I've wanted to help my country.

(no answer)

RONNIE
- and I wanna go. I wanna go to Vietnam. I wanna be part of it.

(a pause)

DAD
Not a nice night for the prom -

NEWSCASTER
Colonel, do you mean...

COLONEL
I mean that....

NEWSCASTER
The Press is not....

COLONEL
...important part in this war effort...is the attitude of the home front.

NEWSCASTER
We...we all know...

COLONEL
...remember one thing now. Up in Hanoi they don't allow newspapers and television to cast any doubts on the....the system - the military system.

NEWSCASTER
Well, I...

COLONEL
...and it seems to me sometimes we forget that.

NEWSCASTER
Well, Colonel the basic question is do you think the South Vietnamese Government is a viable political entity that can stand up to....

68. CONT.

COLONEL
If we didn't think so, we wouldn't be here now, would we -

(Chopper starts coming in overhead, drowning out sound)

69. INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - NITE (1964)

RONNIE is kneeling in front of the MIRROR with the CRUCIFIX in his BEDROOM ("Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen In Me")

RONNIE
...sometimes I'm so confused, I don't know where I'm going...I wanted to go to the Prom tonight - with Donna but....but I didn't and I don't really know if I wanted to go into the Marine Corps but I did... help me found out the way to go Jesus...help me.

(CONTINUED)

70. THE RAIN lashing against the bedroom window, suggesting a plea to a barbaric god. RONNIE inside on his knees.

cut

EXT. KOVIC HOUSE & STREET - NIGHT (1964)

71. LONG SHOT - DOOR to RONNIE'S HOUSE suddenly opening. A shaft of light - RONNIE tearing out into the rain.

EXT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT (1964)

72. THE LIGHTS OF THE PROM - MUSIC - THE DRIFTERS' "UNDER THE BOARDWALK"...RONNIE, soaking, runs up - out of breath. Looking. Advances.

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT (1964)

73. THE DANCERS - A BAND - slow dancing...MOVING ALONG STEVIE and his DATE, JOEY, FINELLI, VORSOVICH, FANTOZZI, TIMMY - and DONNA dancing with JED - now stops amazed as WE MOVE TO RONNIE advancing through the dancers, dripping wet, seeing Donna, a trace of insanity, desperation in his eyes....the DANCERS stopping, looking at him surprised... as he totally ignores Jed, his eyes never leaving Donna ...coming up to her -

RONNIE
Would you dance with me, Donna?

DONNA
Sure...yes...

The MUSIC shifting to The Beatles' "HARD DAY'S NIGHT" as he takes her in his arms and they dance....TRACKING THEM past the other dancers -

...He is not a good dancer, but a wealth of feeling carries him...her head on his shoulder, eyes filled with feelings ...Turning. His head on her shoulder, eyes open...a forever dance.

cut

74. OMIT

INT. PARRIS ISLAND BARBERSHOP - DAY (1965)

75. BARBERSHOP - hair flying all over the place.

PROFILE RONNIE - his head now bald. Staring.

BARBER
(angry)
Get the fuck up! Next!

75. CONT.

Ronnie moving out and the next BOY jumping into the chair staring straight ahead, at rigid attention.

cut

INT. PARRIS ISLAND BARRACKS - DAY (1965)

76. A HANGAR - a line of wooden boxes with numbers on them. 80 BOYS are in rows, all naked. THE SECOND SERGEANT running up and down the line SCREAMING into their ears, AD LIB, jabbing them, cursing.

77. ANOTHER ANGLE - FIRST SERGEANT AND PLATOON

FIRST SERGEANT
Awright ladies we are going to begin today by learning how to dress. I want you to look down into your boxes and I want you to look for a pair of black socks...Ladies, do you see that pair of black socks?

PLATOON
YESSIR!

FIRST SERGEANT
AGAIN!

PLATOON
(as one)
YESSIR!!!!

FIRST SERGEANT
Now I want you to grab that pair of black socks
(MOVEMENT)
WHEN I tell you to!
(MOVEMENT ceases)
And when I tell you to grab them I want you to put them on. Do you understand that, ladies?

PLATOON
YESSIR!

FIRST SERGEANT
THEN...DO IT!

160 HANDS SLAM into the boxes.

80 BOYS scramble to get their socks on ASAP

77. CONT.

ANOTHER ANGLE

FIRST SERGEANT
Now grab your trousers. These are trousers. Not pants. Pants are for little girls! Trousers are for Marines!...Put your trousers ON!

PLATOON
YESSIRRRR!

Grabbing trousers, belts.

cut

78. EXT. PARRIS ISLAND BARRACKS & STREET - DAY (1965)

RONNIE, with his hat swimming down over his eyes and enormous pants hanging down below his boots, is jogging out the HANGAR in formation; the 80 are shoving, pushing, holding on to each other like children, a tense and twisted mass, most of them badly fitting sizes. Intersecting:

FIRST SERGEANT
You will find out I believe in The Marine Corps like a priest believes in God. The word 'sympathy' is not in my dictionary; if it were it'd be somewhere between 'syphillis' and 'shit' so if you want to get your asses off this Island alive, then... X

He sees something, breaks off, glaring at RON.

FIRST SERGEANT (cont'd)
You! Maggot!

RONNIE
(normal voice)
Yes sir!

FIRST SERGEANT
I told you, pussycat, to take off everything that reminds me of civilian scum, did I not!

RONNIE
Yes sir!

FIRST SERGEANT
Say it! LOUDER!

RONNIE
YES SIR!

78. CONT.

FIRST SERGEANT
(even louder)
THEN TAKE THAT FUCKING THING OFF!

Ronnie is shaken.

RONNIE
What thing, SIR!

78. CONT.

ANOTHER ANGLE -

SERGEANT
THAT THING!!!!

JABS his finger almost through RONNIE's throat, indicating the gold cross around his neck. Ronnie throws a look, a plea.

RONNIE
Sir, my mother...

SERGEANT
DON'T TALK BACK TO ME, YOU FUCKING MAGGOT. Don't EVER talk back to me. I AM YOUR MOTHER...

RONNIE
YES SIR!

He is about to grab the cross from his neck but Ronnie quickly reaches up first and

ANOTHER ANGLE - undoes it from the back of his neck and hands it to the SERGEANT.

cut

79. A MONTAGE based on SOUND:

PLATOON running in full pack up a HILL; in sync with FX - boots beating cement.

VOICE
SING OUT, SCUMBAGS!

VOICES
(in singsong cadence)
One Two...One Two

VOICE
SING OUT...if I die in a combat zone ...

VOICES
...pack me up and ship me home...
ONE TWO...

VOICE
(snap)
three, four!...if I die on the Russian front

VOICES
bury me with a Russki cunt...

79. CONT.

VOICE
Hee high ho hum!

VOICES
...bury me with a Russki cunt...
One Two.

80. RONNIE running along, doing well, as a KID adjacent him completely collapses in the heat, the tin in his pack rattling against the cement.

VOICES
...Three Four...

SGT. VOICE
Get up there, get up! Get up!
Get up! Get up!

2ND VOICE
Get down! Get down! Get down!

81. & 82. OMIT

EXT. PARRIS ISLAND OBSTACLE COURSE - DAY (1965)

83. RECRUITS racing down the overhead parallel bars, one after the other, fast like a factory of canned goods. Off the bar and racing on.

VOICES
(first rung)
MARINE CORPS MARINE CORPS MARINE CORPS

VOICES
(second rung)
PORK CHOP HILL PORK CHOP HILL
PORK CHOP HILL

VOICE
DO IT DO IT DO IT DO IT DO IT!!

EXT. PARRIS ISLAND - DAY (1965)

84. FIRST SERGEANT yelling

SERGEANT
PUMP IT PUMP IT PUMP IT

85 A RECRUIT CLOSE gasping and passing out - unnoticed as ROAR FX

EXT. PARRIS ISLAND - ELLIOTT'S BEACH - DAY (1965)

86. VOICES
KILLL KILLLL....KILLLLLLL!

SMASH - THUD...shrieks. Pugil sticking.

RONNIE whacking his GUY down to the ground and yelling from behind the grilled mask.

86. CONT.

RONNIE
YAAAAAAAA!

WHACKS him on the ground.

87., 88., 89., 90., 91., 92. OMIT

EXT. PARRIS ISLAND - DAY (1965)

93. RONNIE is at rigid attention singing loud and off beat - DAY

RONNIE
"From the halls of Montezuma
to the shores of Tripoli
we have fought our country's battles
on the land and on the sea..."

SOCK. PUNCH. He winces.

ANOTHER ANGLE - TWO DRILL INSTRUCTORS are punching him out in front of the PLATOON at attention.

VOICES
You gonna cry?

You gonna cry Kovics?

CRY YOU LITTLE MAGGOT

Ronnie staggers, keeps his feet. They jab him in the gut, kidney, back, shouting into his ear - not so much sadistic as testing him.

VOICES
Are you gonna cry? Is that what's gonna happen? Everybody, I want you to look at this, look over here people...I want you to see the baby cry...are those tears?

The camera getting closer and closer, past the PLATOON now - more buffeting, Ronnie hunching over, folding his gut...

VOICES
CRY CRY CRY YOU LITTLE BABY...
That's what we want, we want you people to cry like little babies because that's what all you little maggots are. You are nothing!
ARE YOU GONNA CRY SCUM?

93. CONT.

The camera closing in - Ronnie holding his belly, about to puke.

Then bracing himself, veins standing out in his forehead, rights himself and yells back at the top of his lungs at the INSTRUCTORS.

RONNIE
I AM A MARINE. I WILL NOT CRY.
I WILL NEVER CRY...NEVER NEVER
NEVER!!!!

His face contorted, the camera very close now as:

the FIRST SERGEANT, ecstatic about his response, SLUGS him for real in the belly.

SERGEANT
YEAH!!!!!!!!

cut

94. OMIT

95. OMIT

96. OMIT

97. EXT. VIETNAM (1ST PATROL) - DAY (1967)

ABSOLUTE SILENCE - as

A LONG RANGE RECONNAISSANCE PATROL MOVES (18 men), spaced at long intervals - light gear, bush hats, camouflaged fatigues - thick luxuriant foliage high on a hill overlooking a VALLEY in VIETNAM - wide, magnificent vistas. But the jungle is so quiet that as

98. A MAN pees - the FX can be heard over

99. EXT. VIETNAM (1ST PATROL) - DAY (1967)

PATROL moving

100. LEECHES dropping off the trees; FX as they plop on the earth.

cut

EXT. VIETNAM (1ST PATROL/CHOW) - DAY (1967)

101. AN EXOTIC BIRD, wild and colorful, SQUAWKS and passes over

102. THE PATROL chowing down - astronaut type rations, precooked. LATE AFTERNOON...

EXT. VIETNAM (1ST PATROL) - DAY (1967)

103. RON, now wearing a Marine jungle jacket and a bush hat, looking much older, tougher, his eyes rimmed with the blackness of fatigue, peering out over the Valley with binoculars

104. HIS POV - VALLEY - a TRAIL evident but no movement

105. RON, patient, moving the binoculars laterally...sweat greasing his eyes. MUSIC THEME creeping in - the onrushing force, building to an indication over the following scene that Ron has arrived at a peak in his life - the moment of his glory. His war. His VIETNAM.

106. HIS POV - a BLUR OF MOVEMENT along the trail - then coming into view, a POINTMAN cautious, then followed by an NVA scouting party, light gear, 6 MEN, zigzagging at a trot down the trail.

107. RON - excited - off the binoculars

108. MOVING along the ridge to the LIEUTENANT in the party, a young handsome figure.

RON
(in a crouch, pointing)
Lieutenant, six NVA...scouts!

cut

LIEUTENANT over the binoculars next to RON and a RADIO OPERATOR.

RON
(into radio)
Lima Peter Six confirm 6 VC in position grid tango echo echo sierra sierra romeo sierra. Shell willy peter -

cut

EXT. VIETNAM (1ST PATROL) - DAY (1967)

109. POV - an EXPLOSION on the trail below. LIGHT, SMOKE - a distant SOUND as it rolls up the walls of the hill. ANOTHER EXPLOSION

110. LIEUTENANT MOVING fast off the binoculars, past RON.

LIEUTENANT
On the money! Okay Sarge, let's get down there -

RON
(hurrying, gathering the others)
Okay, let's go - let's go!

cut

EXT. VIETNAM (1ST PATROL) - DAY (1967)

111. DIMINISHING LIGHT - STILLNESS - the PLATOON staked out along the trail, both sides. Smoke, debris. Three corpses. A sense of being trapped down here in the valley as opposed to their previous position on the hill; the men edgy, watching the trees.

112. A VC CORPSE, mouth open in a half-scream, being frisked by dirty, insect-bitten HANDS...pulling out filthy dispatch papers...MOVING up to RONNIE examining them as WILSON, 19, hunches next to him - a pale, emaciated newboy face, of somewhat frail, holy cast, reacting sharply to a sudden MOVEMENT up the jungle, echoing down the incline - crouching, tense:

WILSON
Whawazat!

SILENCE now...

RON
(glancing)
Rock ape - probably.

Rising, walking. Wilson following.

WILSON
(a southern drawl, worried)
I feel boo-coo gooks around.

RON
(feeling his need to talk)
You get used to that...how long you got in, Wilson?

112. CONT.

WILSON
Two months infantry, two weeks this...

RON
Where from?

WILSON
First Battalion, Ninth.

RON
No - before that, where you from in the world?

WILSON
Oh - Millan...Georgia.

RON (smiles)
Georgia? Georgia boys do okay out here. My second tour, I haven't seen one get hurt yet.

WILSON
(wanting to believe)
Yeah?

RON
You'll be okay...Hey Marine...
(Wilson looks at him)
Your safety. Put it on before you kill somebody.

Ron pats him reassuringly as he comes to the LIEUTENANT on the radio with a beefy 40 year old Sergeant (no stripes on Marine shirts) - hands the Lieutenant the dead man's papers.

RON
Looks like marching orders - lotta numbers.

LIEUTENANT
(pocketing them, worried, moving)
We gotta move back up 713 asap. Spotted a large force of Regulars coming this way. We're gonna bivouac on the hill, let's go...

RON
Shit...going up there in the dark?

112. CONT.

SERGEANT
(moving out the men)
Okay, third squad move it out -
keep it quiet -

cut

EXT. VIETNAM (WILSON) - DUSK (1967)

113. THE PLATOON moving back up the Valley, through jungle. Deepening shadow, ALMOST DARK.

EXT. VIETNAM (WILSON) - DUSK (1967)

114. TWO MEN coming through, followed by RON moving fast, bringing up the rear. Looking behind him. Mosquitoes whirring furiously. Turns back. Suddenly a LOUD VOICE up ahead shattering the stillness.

VOICE 1
ZIBOTSKY!

Pause.

VOICE 2
WHAT THE FU -

VOICE 1
ZIBOTSKY!

It is puzzling strange - then an EXPLOSION - like a grenade. Silence. Two beats. Then a horrifying SCREAM from somewhere up front.

SCREAM

Endless. RON listening to it...chilled.

SOLDIER
(in front of Ron)
What the....

Now GUNFIRE, sharp four clip bursts - incoming. Snapping by. Two staggered grenade EXPLOSIONS. RON MOVING up to his RADIO OPERATOR -

VOICE
WILSON!

VOICE
Duderhoeffer....where's Duderhoeffer.

114. CONT.

RADIO OPERATOR
(to Ron)
No contact!

115. TRACKING A SOLDIER who comes tearing through the bush, fatigues ripped to shreds, no hat, just a rifle - intersecting RON and his OPERATOR

SOLDIER
GET BACK! IT'S A FUCKING COMPANY!

RON
WHAT

SOLDIER
Lieutenant said get back to the trail!

Sailing past. RON grabbing the radio again. Blackness now.

RON
Three Actual. Three Actual come in!

Dead in his hand -

RON
(to the radio operator)
Okay, okay - pull back!

The OPERATOR hustling off, crouched under the SOUND of steady GUNFIRE up ahead. Ron bringing up the rear, slowly. Reluctant to run, hating this sloppy retreat, wanting to hold the line - in limbo. The foliage THRASHING around him as MEN run back.

116. MOVEMENT - SHAPES thrashing, pulling back...now a burst of intense GUNFIRE very close and sharp to the side.

RON hitting the ground - a grenade EXPLOSION close...

117. LOW ANGLE - a huge snake, ten feet long, moving with power, grace and fear, shoots

118. PAST RON who freaks...bullets sucking past directly overhead...crawls fast, suddenly panicking...THUDS hard right into a TREE in the blackness...losing his hat, a YELL of pain, dazed. The FIRE is all around him now, the battle moving backwards with the speed of the snake. A CRY from the dark.

118. CONT.

RON feeling the blood on his forehead, screwing deeper into the ground, in terror of the unknown. THRASHING MOVEMENTS now burst open very close. He swings his rifle in that direction, hugging the earth.

A SILHOUETTE now POPS through - going very fast, crouched, right at

RON seeing it with widened eyes.

THE SILHOUETTE coming fast - right at him - 15 yards, 10 -

CLOSE RON - FIRING...one, two, three, four....

THE SILHOUETTE hit, lurching, YELLS, but keeps coming.... closer, caught in a stray greyish beam of light - A FACE - now

SMASHING right into RON - FX of bodies and metal colliding. Ron crunched under the toppling body.

cut

EXT. VIETNAM (WILSON) - DUSK (1967)

119. NO GUNFIRE SOUND - SHAPES MOVING THROUGH THE DARK, policing up after the firefight. They could be enemy or Marines....A SHAPE moving closer. Finally:

SHAPE
Kovic, where's Kovic?

VOICE
(close)
Over here

CLOSE RON, his cheek flat to the earth, eyes groggy. Thrashing SOUNDS of an approaching man. HANDS reaching down, over his face.

VOICE
Okay, babe, okay

MOVEMENT - rolling the body off RON

VOICE
(distant)
Wilson?.....Wilson!

VOICE
(above Ron)
Who's this?

119. CONT.

Movement. Flicking his cigarette lighter on. RON rolling upwards, blood smearing his face from the forehead gash, now intersecting:

VOICE
Oh FUCK!

WILSON - his eyes open in surprise, bulging at Ron, a huge hole smeared with blood on his gaping throat - coming into the glow of the cigarette lighter.

VOICE
(again, horrified)
FUCK! - WILSON!

RON numb, incredulous.

cut

120. EXT. VIETNAM BASECAMP - NIGHT (1967)

RAIN OVER TENTS - a basecamp someplace.

121. RON moving through the rain, the muzzle of his M-14 slung down over his back, lifts a flap and enters a TENT.

122. INT. VIETNAM MAJOR'S TENT - NIGHT (1967)

INSIDE THE TENT - RON comes in under the flap. HEAVY FX of rain beating on canvas...a chill in the air...THE MAJOR is an austere sparse man in his thirties fully formed along Marine lines, doing paperwork at the desk, glasses on his nose, looks up.

MAJOR
Yes, Kovic - you wanted to see me?

RON
Uh - yes sir - do you have a minute sir.

MAJOR
Sure. Fire away.

RON
Well. It's about the other night...

MAJOR
...yes, lieutenant told me...

RON
...the ambush....

122. CONT.

MAJOR
...was a rough night. Ran into a few of them didn't you....

RON
...oh yeah, I don't know sir, it was real dark and they just sort of popped up...and people were moving back and there was a lot of screaming and yelling...and what I'm trying to tell you was that....I think I shot my own man. I think it was me who killed Wilson.

A pause.

MAJOR
I don't think so. I....

RON
It was real dark and we were taking a lot of fire. And he was the last one to....

MAJOR
I know. It's confusing out there. I was out a couple of weeks ago. A lot of men go through that. It gets dark. A lot of incoming rounds. I know what it's like. You didn't shoot him.

ANOTHER ANGLE - the echoes of the rain. RON stares down at the floor, until he is sure he can say it again, uncertain the Major has heard him the first time.

RON
But I just want you to know Major - for the record - I think it was me. I think I did it.

The MAJOR staring away, then back -

MAJOR
I don't think so, Kovic....

RON -

MAJOR
Good night, Sergeant.

cut

123. EXT. VIETNAM - RON'S TENT - NIGHT (1967)

RON sloshing back through the cold MONSOON WIND, along a path made of wooden ammo casing - dark and hard to see.

123. CONT.

He stumbles on the wooden boxes.

124. RON entering his TENT.

INT. VIETNAM - RON'S TENT - NIGHT (1967)

125. FOUR MEN playing poker adjacent, talking, now falling silent and looking at Ron, then turning away, strained as they resume the game.

126. RON lying on his rack, wet, miserable.

cut

EXT. VIETNAM (RON'S HIT) - DAY (1968)

127. A SMOKE GRENADE is popped and thrown as

THREE HUEY CHOPPERS come in low over a hilltop towards

128. RON AND RADIO OPERATOR with 6 OTHERS preparing for first wave extraction. The twelve others are securing the extraction perimeter further down the hill.

RADIO VOICE (OVER)
Sierra Three, Three Actual.
Perimeter is secure. Over.

RON
Roger that, Three Actual. Sierra
Three ready for extraction. Over.

Motioning his men towards the CHOPPER now hovering. He looks fiercer, more reckless than before.

RADIO VOICE 2
Three Actual! Three Actual!
Romeo Three. Snipers spotted
south side. About five zero
meters.

Ron looking up confused as

129. THE CHOPPER suddenly lurches, veers, then shoots off to the side. SOUND of gunfire lost under the roar of chopper blades.

RADIO VOICE 1
Romeo Three! Romeo Three!

RADIO VOICE 2
RIGHT THERE....SAMUELSON!

129. CONT.

The CHOPPER goes into a wild barrel-rolling spin and CRASHES, OFF - down the hillside. A WHOOSH of hot fuel shoots up into view

130. THE SECOND CHOPPER passing over

131. RON yelling into the radio, lost under the noise - off the radio.

RON
THIRD SQUAD up - on the line south side. Let's go! Let's go!

Leading them - down the hillside. A huge ROCKET EXPLOSION off.

132. THIRD CHOPPER raking the hillside with M-60 machine gun fire.

133. TRACKING RON running down the hillside, now intersecting a big BLACK MARINE, hatless, pulling a twisted body towards some form of cover as if still alive; face down it tracks through the dirt, twisting around to reveal the handsome LIEUTENANT dead, his face blackened with dirt. No incoming fire now and sporadic going out.

RON
Lieutenant?

BLACK MARINE
(stunned, bleeding from the neck)
...He's dead....they got him...
They got rockets. They got rockets.

RON
Where? How many?

BLACK MARINE
(shakes his head)
I don't know - down there -
I don't know

RON
HOW FAR!

BLACK MARINE
(vague)
down there - we gotta get out of here, we gotta get out of here.

Ron catalyzed, shakes him hard.

133. CONT.

RON
SHADDUP!! Motherfucker - YOU HEAR - Get a hold of yourself!

The Black Marine stares at him.

134. ANOTHER ANGLE - RON runs laterally down the line, past SEVERAL MEN crouched in individual pockets, scared.

RON
LAY OUT SOME FIRE GODDAMN IT!

Fire starts to go out.

Ron firing a clip from a standing position - feeling clear and angry, the top of the world.

REVERSE ANGLE - raking the jungle with fire.

RON feeding another clip in.

RON
First and Third UP - first on the right, third on the left.
Let's move out - rapid fire!
Let's get these fuckers!

Firing on full automatic, he steps out -

OTHER MEN looking at him, starting slowly to move forward. Suddenly stopping, hitting the ground again as

LONG SHOT - RON jerks and collapses.

BLOOD on shredded BOOTS - the back of the heel blown out ...MOVING UP FAST to RON in pain - yanking himself around and

RON
Come on, keep moving. Don't stop!

ADJACENT MEN looking over worried.

SOLDIER
Kovic?....you all right

OVERHEAD ANGLE - RON shifting on the ground...a SILENCE around - a ghostly wind blowing over the mountain. Eerie in its innocence, like boys playing in a wood. Time out.

THE BUSHES - flowing with the wind.

134. CONT.

RON - almost about to cry from frustration....in conversational tones...

RON
What is it, what is it - what is wrong with you guys, hunh? There's three or four fucking gooks out there and you're shitting in your fucking pants, they killed the Lieutenant and they blew out a chopper and you sit there like a bunch of fucking assholes. Now move it, move it!

Crouching up on his wound, jamming a clip in

RON
YOU SUCK CHARLIE. YOU EAT SHIT, YOU LITTLE FUCK!

135. THE BRIEFEST GLIMPSE of an ENEMY FACE - somewhere in the ground, a spider hole, moving back in...the fraction of a second where the shot has just been fired.

136. SOUND HUGE CLOSE OVER RON'S RIGHT EAR -

BLACKNESS - a sharp FADE IN over a short harsh SUCKING SOUND on a FACE (RON), the eyes staring through a filthy skin mask, bewildered (how long have I been out?.....30 seconds, a day? where am I?) then

MOVEMENT, delayed, as the BACK OF THE HEAD THUDS LOW ANGLE onto the ground...that harsh SUCK of air....

FACE (RON) - desecrated, hardly able to breathe...a distant VOICE blending with the sucking SOUND.

VOICE
Kovic? Kovic? ....you okay?

HEAVY ROCKET EXPLOSION now nearby...SHOTS

EAR (RON) covered with dirt that looks like wet black shit..

VOICE 1
(screaming)
My finger! Where the fuck's my finger!

VOICE 2
Let's gitouta here, let's GO

136. CONT.

ANOTHER EXPLOSION

VOICE 2
Jesus Fucking Christ!

RON staring, eyes open - as if in a pasture someplace, 9 years old again, listening to the sounds.

HIS HAND digging in the dirt, clenching it.

HIS CROSS hanging loose across his green t-shirt, bubbling in blood - his other DIRTY HAND grasping the cross. Such is the tension of that hand that he breaks it off with loud FX

137. HIS LEGS bent at the knees sticking out at an odd angle.

HIS HEAD moving on the hinge of the neck, experimenting with the sensation, craning to look down at the legs (why don't I feel them?)...that SUCKING SOUND...BULLETS popping overhead, but sounding muted like timber being cut in a far wood...his eyes looking for it.....sensing his Death.

A FLASH OF MOVEMENT

RON is lifted like a sack of hay and

THROWN OVER A SHOULDER - and the big BLACK MARINE moves like the force of a hurricane back up the hill, screaming, pumping himself up. SHOOTING around him.

BLACK MARINE
MOTHERFUCKERS! MOTHERFUCKERS!

THE SKY, THE SUN rattling upside down from

RON'S EYES - dangling up alongside the shoulder of the black Marine.

EXT./INT. VIETNAM - AMTRACK - DAY (1968)

138. FASTER AND FASTER IMAGES NOW:

THE DARK INSIDE of a MOVING AMTRACK...rattling, bumping, grinding gears...a nest of WOUNDED MEN roiling like snakes strapped to their stretchers...

VOICES
Get me outahere...you fucks...
you hear me!

138. CONT.

MOVING TO RON...to A YOUNG KID cupping his intestines.... a grizzled VETERAN vomiting...

VOICE
Oh God Jesus! Mom...Mom, don't let me die, please don't let me die!

EXT. VIETNAM - CHOPPER PAD - DAY (1968)

139. THE TRAPDOOR squeaks open, onto SUNLIGHT...jungle, a clearing...CHOPPERS.

RON is slid on his stretcher into a CHOPPER, the inside of which is splattered with blood...It bumps, lifts, lurches sideways, goes...a GLIMPSE of JUNGLE...

cut

140. OMIT

EXT. VIETNAM - AIRFIELD - NIGHT (1968)

141. RON on a litter with tubes and bottles shoved in his nose and arms, being transferred into a large C-130.

INT. VIETNAM - C-30 PLANE - NIGHT (1968)

142. THE INTERIOR OF PLANE is stacked with wounded MEN - more wounded than he could ever have imagined.

143. PLANE flying...a MAN thrashing with gauze wrapped around his head and eyes. He is thrashing like a fish, like he was buried alive six feet under ground and was screaming to get out...senseless words.

MAN
...tha...tha...tha...tha tha tha!
(then)
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

RON tensing.

VOICES
SHADDUP, SHADDUP YOU HEAR!...
SHUT THE FUCK UP!

SCREAM
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

EXT. VIETNAM - C-130 PLANE/ASIA - NIGHT (1968)

144. THE PLANE rocks in the bumpy night somewhere over Asia, lost in a fog of hell...scudding threadbare clouds lit

144. CONT.

by a raging moon...from inside the plane - FX like a pack of demons all howling at once.

INT. ASIAN HOSPITAL WARD - DAY (1968)

FAST IMAGES CONTINUING:

145. HOSPITAL WARD - confusion, 40-50 cases lining a ROOM - the MEN still covered with mud, shredded fatigues, filthy tourniquets, abdominal packs clutched to their stomachs by filthy hands, vacuum bottles swinging from the bottoms of their stretchers, dirty chest tubes stuck clumsily through their skins; the NOISE deafening. In foreground:

MEDIC 1
(moving)
Got twelve hummers here and six rotacery cases, let's go let's go!

MEDIC 2
(to Medic 3)
Give him 250 milligrams Thorazine IM every 4 hours till he's asleep ...Just get him to sleep!

MOVING TO RON - framed by a screaming BLACK SOLDIER next to him. Ron still has the tubes and needles in his arms, groggy.

RON
....somebody?....

A MEDIC, above another LITTER CASE, flicking off data on a sheet with a pencil. To MEDIC 4

MEDIC 3
...congestion liver and lungs... acute pneumonitis...extensive acute renal tubular necrosis - bilateral...got that?

Intersecting RON.

RON
...somebody...something's wrong with me...

Medic 3 quickly inspects his body.

145. CONT.

RON
(trying to enunciate clearly)
...they have to operate, soon as possible...please. - Will you tell them?

His voice is weak. MEDIC 3, without a word or look, turns away.

RON
(raising his voice)
Will you tell them?

146. SUDDEN THRASHING from the BLACK MAN in background. A NURSE rushing into frame.

NURSE
His heart. Get the machine!

As he hurries off, a CORPSMAN rushes over and jumps on the BLACK MAN's chest, putting his knees right on it and pounding the chest with a fist.

A DOCTOR and the NURSE 1 push the heart/pump machine over

CORPSMAN
It's stopped!

The DOCTOR hands a syringe to the Corpsman who plunges it into the BLACK MAN's chest like a knife, as the Doctor grabs a long suction cup attached to the machine and places it carefully over the patient's chest.

CORPSMAN
I think he's gone.

The Doctor motions the Corpsman off, hurriedly, and climbs up on top of him.

ANOTHER ANGLE - the face of the BLACK MAN is now puffy like a balloon, saliva rolling from the sides of it - staring, the whites of his eyes rolling upwards.

DOCTOR
(screaming)
Turn it on!....NOW!

SOUND - SNZZZZZZZZZZZZZ!

The BLACK MAN bucks straight up from the bed towards the ceiling in a grotesque dance. Then, falling back...

146. CONT.

THE DOCTOR leaning back, relaxing. Pause - the tension easing out.

DOCTOR
(over his shoulder)
...I took the Packers at minus seven.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE NURSE pulling the sheet over the CORPSE. CORPSMAN looking abstractedly at the dead man.

CORPSMAN
Shit, Packers don't have a chance.

INT. ASIAN HOSPITAL WARD - DAY (1968)

147. RON shifting his eyes quickly as a HAND comes down over his forehead.

A PRIEST appearing, almost miraculously, right above him.

PRIEST
How are you?

Rubbing Ron's forehead slowly and softly.

RON

RON
I'm okay Father...when...when will they operate?

THE PRIEST - the face deeply tired but at ease; he has done it many times before - so often that he doesn't really relate to the individual in front of him anymore. In a pedantic tone, marked by a Bronx accent:

PRIEST
The doctors are very busy right now, there are many wounded today. There is not much time for anything here but trying to live. So you must try to live my son...
(soft)
...try to stay alive...try to stay alive...and we will pray. Are you ready?

RON suddenly understands. A jolt of the eyes. But then it gives way to the Marine in Ron...hardening reflex.

147. CONT.

RON
(a glow in his eyes)
I'm ready Father

ANOTHER ANGLE

PRIEST
I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever...

Rubbing oil on RON's forehead and now pressing:

HIS CRUCIFIX to RON'S LIPS...Ron hesitantly reaches up and kisses the cross...absolute fear starting to crawl into his eyes.

PRIEST (OVER)
...liveth and believeth in me, shall never die...We brought nothing into this World, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away...

cut

INT. ASIAN OPERATING ROOM - DAY (1968)

148. RON CLOSE - on an operating table. Analytic lighting... A MASK now placed over his face...

PRIEST (OVER)
...blessed be the name of the Lord

RON
(very weak)
...You going to operate now?

ANOTHER ANGLE - DOCTORS, NURSES...a VOICE, muted and subterranean speaking through a mask:

VOICE
Yes. Now son breathe deeply into the mask. You'll be fine...just fine...there you go...there...

cut

INT. VET WARD & HALL - DAY (1968)

149. A QUIET WARD...somewhere unidentifiable...the sun just

149. CONT.

shining in through the windows...sound FX - THE STEADY DRIPPING of a big plastic bag - urine overflowing onto the floor...plip plop.

RON lying on his stomach in a bed with dirty sheets, silent - seemingly asleep.

150. OUTER HALLWAY - AIDES (two blacks and a white) are picking up the paralyzed DRUNKS, some of them fallen from their chairs, and wheeling them back to their wards. Empty liquor bottles rattle around the floor.

VOICES
Let's go! Come on - Landers!

151. AN AIDE opening up a PANTRY CLOSET and discovering a PARAPLEGIC shooting up a QUADRAPLEGIC in the side of his neck. The quad is slumped, dosed out.

AIDE 2
(grabbing the needle)
Hey Mardigian! Now didn't I tell you not to do that to him in the A.M.!

MARDIGIAN shrugs.

152. RON'S WARD - the noise and activity level is now starting to pick up as the AIDES wheel the drunks back in. NURSE GARCIA, stout in her 20's, moving towards a bed, intersecting PATIENT 1 tossing a worn piece of bread over the radiator.

PATIENT 1
(excited)
Hey there he goes again!

A FLURRY OF MOVEMENT

PATIENT 1
That fucking rat's getting bigger every day...One day he's gonna eat you pretty little ass Garcia.

NURSE GARCIA is taking a cork out of a metal contraption in PATIENT 3's neck and sticking a long rubber tube in where the cork was, paying no attention.

153. OMIT

INT. WARD - DAY (1968)

154. RON lying there on his belly, awake now. Solemn. Much

154. CONT.

NOISE. FRANKIE, a little Irish Jimmy Durante type in his 30's, bounces up, clicking his fingers.

FRANKIE
Hey Kovic, wake up - come on... six o'clock special...

cut

INT. VET BLUE ROOM - DAY (1968)

155. THE BLUE ROOM - TEN twisted MEN, all tied down to their frames with their rear ends sticking out, are packed in the small room like sardines; many of them still trying to sleep, refusing to admit this whole thing is happening to them; a couple of them have small radios close to their ears...as FRANKIE runs back and forth placing bedpans under rear ends, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his lip, whistling between lines.

THE MUSIC THEME comes in -

FRANKIE
Okay, okay let's go. Bernstein, what's the matter with you today, didn't you eat...that's the way, Fenaday, that's the way...ooooh look at that ass, Hopkins, you been sitting on it again, ain't you...

Jangling pans, undoing little clips on the rubber tubes, jumping around, a big can of soapy water above each head and a tube coming down from it, which Frankie sticks into each man.

RON - waiting, miserable. FRANKIE moving up behind him, changing the rubber gloves on his hands, squirting lubricant on his fingers.

FRANKIE
My man Kovic! Mister Fourth of July...

Rams his hands up into his rear end.

RON adjusting position...FRANKIE over him whistling a strident "Yankee Doodle Dandy"...

INT. STERILIZING ROOM - DAY (1968)

155A. AN AIDE emptying bedpans into cans; ANOTHER AIDE putting

155A. CONT.

a stack of empty bedpans in a machine and closing it. A STEAM SOUND drowning out Frankie's whistle.

cut

INT. VET WARD & HALL - NIGHT (1968)

156. DIM SHADOWS - RON lies in his bed on his belly watching as

A BLACK HOOKER slides her dress off in the shadow...NIGHT

HOOKER
(whisper)
Got the bread?

A RUSTLE of paper. Pause. She climbs up on top of the unseen PATIENT not far from Ron. Pause.

HOOKER
Like this?

PATIENT
Yeah...
(long sigh)
...yeah!

cut

INT. VET WARD & HALL - DAWN (1968)

157. THREE DOCTORS around RON in his bed, EARLY MORNING - MUSIC THEME continuous.

DOCTOR
(sympathetic)
...We want to make it very clear to you, Sergeant, that...the possibility of your ever walking again is minimal - - almost impossible...Probably you'll be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life...Do you understand what I'm saying?

ANOTHER ANGLE - RON focusing slowly on the DOCTOR.

RON
(low-key)
I'm gonna walk again. No matter what you tell me Doctor, I know I'm gonna walk again.

157. CONT.

A pause. They seem hesitant.

DOCTOR
(almost apologetically)
Well, good luck, Sergeant...

They turn away.

cut

INT. VET "GYM" - DAY (1968)

158. RON pushing two 25 pound weights alternately over his head in the EXERCISE ROOM - determined, sweating hard. SIX OTHER MEN are on the mats, also working out.

INT. VET "GYM" - DAY (1968)

159. RON strapped to a BIG WHEEL which he tries to spin with his body.

AN AIDE, tough as a Marine Sergeant, suddenly grabs RON's chair and tips him violently onto the mat, Ron bracing his fall well.

AIDE
Okay! Okay! Good reaction time, Kovic -- now get back in! Go! Go! Up! Up!

Ron crawling back into the chair as fast as he can -

159A. INT. VET "GYM" - DAY (1968)

RON rising up on braces for the first time - in front of the SAME 3 DOCTORS who told him he couldn't walk (Scene 157).

RON
Look....look Doctor -

DOCTORS looking. Ron straining.

RON
...here I am...

cut

INT. VET "GYM" - DAY (1968)

160. RON on braces, using the parallel bars, thick straps around his waist. His blue hospital pants fall down around his waist as he strains furiously, his arms

160. CONT.

shaking with exertion. He turns around, starts back. Obviously he is overdoing it and suddenly he COLLAPSES and falls off the bars..a LOUD CRACK from his leg, like the branch of a tree breaking off.

161. ANOTHER ANGLE - RON lying on the floor, puzzled. His right leg twisted under him at a curious angle; but he doesn't feel anything. AN AIDE runs over.

RON
What's wrong?

AIDE
Jimmy, get the doctor!

RON
(starting to panic)
What the hell was that sound?

cut

INT. VET WARD & HALL - DAY (1968)

162. RON is in bed - with a broken leg, swollen to twice its original size, paler, weak and filthy-looking, unshaven. Two plastic tubes are attached to a battered MACHINE that keeps clanking and pumping loudly - one tube running a clear fluid into the leg, the other carrying a bright red fluid out.

NURSE GARCIA, stout, in her 20's, comes over with tranquilizers and a glass of water. Without any warning, Ron erupts at her.

RON
Why can't I have a bath? Why can't the sheets be changed in this goddamn place, why can't the goddamn vomit be wiped off the goddamn floor once in a while!

GARCIA
Now, now...

RON
No. It's not "now now." Look at my leg! It's twice as big as it ever was. It's not getting any better, it feels like a fucking knife up there
(indicating his brain)
an' I wanna see the Doctor now!

162. CONT.

GARCIA
He's not available now...

ANOTHER ANGLE - a big burly white AIDE, in his 40's, intersects.

AIDE
(jovial)
What's eating you now, Kovac, you going off the deep end?

RON
Deep end? You'd go off the deep end with all this fucking thorazine!

Suddenly slaps the pills out of Garcia's hands.

GARCIA
Oh!

RON
Fuck it!

AIDE
We gonna amputate that leg you go on like this

RON
All I ask is to be treated like a human being.
(Aide chuckles at the line)
I'm a Vietnam veteran. I fought in Vietnam and I gotta right to be treated decently.

AIDE
(loudly)
Vietnam?...Vietnam don't mean nothing to me or any these other people. You can take your Vietnam and shove it up your ass!

Walks off.

MOVING TO RON - an incredible pause. About to do something violent, throw something at him, when suddenly the MACHINE next to the bed CUTS OUT (FX). He stops, worried, surprised.

RON
HEY!

162. CONT.

NURSE GARCIA coming back.

GARCIA
Marvin!

THE AIDE following, pissed. Together with GARCIA, he tries some buttons, levers. Puzzled - he kicks it. Nothing.

AIDE
(at machine)
Fucking asshole!

Kicks it again - very hard. A RATTLE but no movement.

RON freaking.

RON
Get the doctor willya. I don't wanna lose this leg. Get the doctor!

cut

163. A YOUNG DOCTOR - not seen before - comes up, ebullient.

DOCTOR
How you doing Reggie, now let's see what's wrong with this...

Checks the MACHINE as RON looks at him, concerned.

ANOTHER ANGLE -

DOCTOR
(now concerned)
Well...

RON
Let me ask you something...doesn't this hospital have another one, Doctor?

DOCTOR
Well, it's the only one we have, Reggie.

RON
No. It's Ron.... Ron Kovic, Doctor -

163. CONT.

DOCTOR
Ron! Sorry...it's the war in Vietnam, Ron. The Government's just not giving us the money we need to keep up with the casualties ...It's really too bad...
(contemplating the machine, shaking his head)
...it's not fair at all.

ANOTHER ANGLE -

RON
(scared, sweating, trying to enunciate clearly)
Listen, Doc...I've tried really hard to keep this leg, y'know, really hard ...I've done everything...and I'm trying to be calm, y'know...really calm...

DOCTOR
(nodding his head, embarrassed)
Yes, I completely understand...let me check with the emergency unit, maybe we can rig up a substitute...

cut

164. RON lies there alone... the MACHINE silent...nothing happening - looking up at the ceiling in a sweat, his drenched hair spreading a stain across the dirty, greyish pillow...thinking, hoping.

A CLANKING SOUND and the MACHINE just starts up - by itself.

RON looks over at it - bewildered, scared...

cut

EXT. ROVIC HOUSE & STREET - DAY (1968)

165. A CAR DOOR SLAMS and DAD, balder now in his late 50's, comes around the front of the car and opens RON's door, sliding the WHEELCHAIR out of the back seat.

VOICE
Mom! Ronnie's home...

VOICE
Ronnie!

165. CONT.

VOICES
(repeating the message)

LATE AFTERNOON, Septemberish...MUSIC THEME now suggesting the beginnings of a new process, a Fall theme...

A MOVEMENT through the lawn and house - voices, vibrations relayed...TOMMY and BILLY and JAN emerging from varying angles, moving towards the car to help...

166. THE NEIGHBORHOOD taking note... people ceasing their labors on their front lawns and casting curious looks, kids in the street halting their games...nothing seems to have changed on the block except for the automobile styles.

167. RON, his leg healed, into the wheelchair - though strong and efficient, there is still a struggle to it, a tension, a hint of saying 'let me do it, I can do it... you see!' His DAD watching, calm, as TOMMY, 18, runs up - almost unrecognizable from before with long hair, bare feet, no shirt, a Dylan look.

RON
Tommy!

TOMMY
Hey Ron, welcome back.

Hugging him.

RON
Hey Billy!

BILLY, 15, also with long hair, is more taciturn, more seemingly aware of the chair.

BILLY
Hi Ronnie.

RON
Come here, you little squirt...

Enfolds him in a hug as JAN hurries up, 13.

JAN
Ronnie!

RON
Jan!

She joins the hug.

167. CONT.

RON
Boy, you've grown!
(to the brothers)
Hey you guys. Look at you...you look great. Look at those muscles...

Feeling TOMMY's biceps, both brothers with lean hard bodies.

TOMMY
Yeah, it's all that polevaulting.

DAD
Here - lemme....

RON
(overly polite)
Yeah? No, no Dad that's okay...

Wheels the chair forward himself as DAD tries to help, moving a few feet up the lawn. A tension in the air, subtle, as RON feels himself the center of attention and doesn't want it, not now...a part of his mind wandering as he looks off at the surrounding neighborhood, sees it, then turns back as

MAGGIE, 21, comes up, shy.

MAGGIE
Ronnie!

RON
Maggie, hey!

A kiss rather than a hug. MAGGIE more than the others registering the fact of the chair with her large mournful eyes, a strained and pale-looking woman.

RON
Wow, look at you - You're a real woman now. Look at those breasts...

Tweaks them; she shies back.

MAGGIE
Come on.

RON
Where's Mom?

A flick of his eyes catching it - the door BANGING...

167. CONT.

TOMMY (OVER)
Cooking, what else. She's coming -

MOM is standing there outside the kitchen, already looking at him (before he has seen her), her eyes flicking from the wheelchair...moving now across the lawn...looking older, wearier than ever but also tougher, over the menopause.

RON
Mom.

MOM
Ronnie
(closer)
Ronnie!

ANOTHER ANGLE - Hugs him. Then holding his head in her hands, she looks him in the eye, gets down on her knees in front of the chair and cradles him again.

MOM
My baby! My baby, my baby

RON draws back for air, flushed, moved, a little embarrassed.

RON
(speechless)
Phewww!

Looks at all their faces.

ANOTHER ANGLE - the FAMILY drawing around him, like a portrait, in part shielding him in their midst from the looks of the neighbors - SEVEN PEOPLE, all together... a feeling he must say something.

RON
It's really great to be home...
It's really great.

Pause. Closing in on him suddenly...he gets more nervous. DAD tries to say something, decides against. MOM is shaking her head from side to side, twisting up her eyes and trying to hold it back with her teeth on her lower lip, but can't...sobs...breaks the circle.

MOM
I'm...

RON
Mom, please...

167. CONT.

She hurries back to the house.

MAGGIE
(following, distressed)
Mother!

cut

RON wheels up to the smooth polished wooden RAMP leading from the lawn to the porch; changing the subject, bothered.

RON
You built this, Dad?

DAD
(alongside)
Yeah...

JAN
All by himself!

RON
It's really beautiful, Dad.

Starts to wheel himself up with an abrupt, hard motion.

cut

INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - DAY (1968)

168. RON wheeling into his old BEDROOM. Not much has changed - the mirror and crucifix, welcome home cards, flowers, but depressing, cramped, harking back to another age when the room seemed larger and filled with dreams.

DAD
(bypassing into the bathroom)
Fixed up a bathroom for you...ramp...
levelled out the shower stall
(sounds of shower
stall opening)

ANOTHER ANGLE - RON next to a carton in a corner, lumped full of toys, baseball bat, catcher's mitt, toy gun - holding the New York Yankees hat Donna gave him.

RON
Oh thanks...thanks, Dad -

cut

INT. KOVIC KITCHEN - DAY (1968)

169. BILLY MOVING from the refrigerator, a glass of apple juice in hand, in his wrestler's rubber sweat suit, bypassing RON and sitting down at the KITCHEN table, cramped now with the entire FAMILY present, as:

RON
(over coffee, heated, to his DAD)
...the ones who say we don't belong, get out - they're the scum, walking around burning their draft cards, burning the flag. How can they put us down. I lost my body for my country. So what! I did the right thing and I don't need those people to tell me I'm a killer and the war sucks. They suck!

MOM
(wincing)
Ronnie! Do you have to use those words in front of the children. I agree with everything you say but...

RON
Where were they, where were they, Mom? What right do they have. I served my country - and they just take from it. They just take.

ANOTHER ANGLE - pause. TOMMY, finished with his meal, gets up. A strained look on his face.

TOMMY
I gotta do some homework. I'll see you Ron.

MOM - giving him a sharp look as he walks out. A silence. DAD has his eyes down as he drinks his coffee, an obtuse quality, hard to judge what he's thinking.

RON
- and then the other side hates us 'cause we're not winning the war. How can we win in a situation like that - how can we win?

Hears the sound of his own voice, tired of it.

RON
What's wrong with Tommy?

169. CONT.

MOM
Nothing...

DAD
Nothing...

RON
Nothing? Come on -

Silence.

RON
What, is everybody mute around here?

ANOTHER ANGLE - the faces. MOM is troubled.

MOM
Tommy's gonna fail English if he doesn't start working on himself.

MAGGIE
He doesn't believe in the war.

An edge to her low-key manner, evident she agrees with him.

MAGGIE
...he thinks we're killing the wrong people.

RON - an 'oh' look on his face -

MOM jumps in, at MAGGIE.

MOM
What does he know! What does Tommy know about anything...
(to Ron)
He's a good boy but he's hanging around those creepy long haired kids who take drugs.

MAGGIE
That's not true Mom! That's not the reason....

MOM
What do they know, Maggie, what do they know! Have they ever wokred for a living? When Ronnie was Tommy's age, he was working the A & P nights, he was....

169. CONT.

FIXING on RON's face - off somewhere else AS

DAD stands, trying to conciliate.... indicating the porch

DAD
Why don't we just....maybe....

cut

EXT/INT. KOVIC CAR/BOYERS STREET - DAY (SEPT '68)

170. RON in the car as DAD drives later that AFTERNOON...

PAST A THOROUGHFARE in MASSAPEQUA - more supermarkets, more traffic, more people more commerciality....

171. RON turning on the radio and looking as DAD indicates -

DAD
That's Stevie Boyer's new place.

RON
(spotting it)
Yeah?

171A. POV OF BOYER'S STORE - DAY

A BUBBLE-SHAPED HAMBURGER CHAIN - large, modern, clean, spacy with a large parking lot, banners offering specials, and a huge figurine of a woman like the Statue of Liberty except she is holding a hamburger aloft - "BOYERS".

DAD
Took his father's place and made it a chain; he's got four of them now, doing real well.

The MUSIC has crept in now over the car radio - "Bye Bye Miss American Pie" - 'took my chevy to the levy..... well good ol' boys are drinking whisky and rye..... this'll be the day that I die....bye bye Miss American Pie..."

ANOTHER ANGLE

RON
That's great...didn't he go to Queens?

DAD
Yeah, got a business degree. Went nights.

171A. CONT.

RON
Yeah, he said he'd do that even when he was 17, you know, he was always thinking up angles to make money.

DAD
Hey there's Sparky! Remember Sparky?

RON
Sparky - sure.

Looking -

EXT/INT. KOVIC CAR/SPARKY'S - DAY (SEPT '68)

172. THE BARBER POLE and the neat tucked away little wooden shop marked "Sparky's", squeezed between two more modern developments. Yet it too has undergone some change, and boasts an elegant sign saying "Unisexual Haircuts" and the price is now "$4.95". Through the open door, SPARKY, a short heavyset man, is cutting hair.

DAD

DAD
You wanna stop, say hello. Sparky'd be real pleased.

RON
No, not now Dad...I'd really like to get to the school.

cut

EXT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (1968)

172A. RON perking with increased curiosity - agitation as

172B. THE HIGH SCHOOL approaches through the front window. Near twilight, near empty.

cut

172C. RON wheels from the car, closing the door.

DAD
(across the seat)
When you want me to come back?

RON
Oh, 'bout two hours.

172C. CONT.

DAD
You sure you don't want me to come with you?

RON
No that's okay...

cut

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL HALL & ROOM - DAY (1968)

173. RON wheels down an empty CORRIDOR in the High School - stainless, modernized...the Music Theme from the radio in the car has subtly CARRIED OVER - He comes to an open door.

174. A CLASSROOM - empty except for a JANITOR mopping the floor...new aluminum desks (they were wooden in his day), new blackboard, FX as the mop slaps the linoleum floor.

cut

175. OMIT - (THE WRESTLING ROOM)

INT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY (1968)

175A. THE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - RON wheels in. It is echoing, large and empty with the ghosts of the Marine Recruiters haunting the podium that spring day of '65 - and the whisper of marching feet can be heard, as the Marines do their drill step up the center aisle....fading to:

EXT. MASSAPEQUA HIGH SCHOOL BALLFIELD - DAY (1968)

176. RON wheels past the infield of a BASEBALL DIAMOND near TWILIGHT now. A GROUP of 14 year olds practice hitting infield drives, bunting, racing against each other in the outfield, a pickup practice...he stops, looking at them, a new generation.

A BOY with the numeral 7 written across his top, hitting pop flies...

RON wheels toward home plate, intersection a BOY walking away with a bat.

RON
Mind if I try a few swings?

The boy, amazed, shrugs 'okay', gives him the bat, looks out at

THE PITCHER on the mound - a tough wiry kid who watches as

176. CONT.

RON wheels to the side of the plate, takes a few swings.

RON
(smiling)
Go on, throw it in...throw one for the old man.

KIDS in the dugout looking, surprised - a transistor radio playing "Bye Bye Miss American Pie".

THE PITCHER shrugs and tosses in a fat warm-up pitch - big and slow...

RON swings fluidly, getting a small piece of it - a chopped grounder...

KIDS have gathered on all sides, watching.

RON (OVER)
C'mon is that all you got? Throw it! Zing it in! I'm not that bad -

THE PITCHER looks at his teammates, wondering what to do....warms up, making more of an effort, throws it with a bit of a curve...OVER HIS SHOULDER - RON misses widely.

THE FACES of the KIDS looking at each other.

RON annoyed.

RON
C'mon, gimme another shot - three strikes.

jump cut

RON misses the pitch again...exertion, a lather on his brow.

RON
(angrier with himself)
C'mon, gimme the fastball! I can hit it...one time I hit it right out of this park -
(indicates)
Right over there.

KIDS pawing, edging off - 'sure you did' expressions.

RON - CLOSE

RON
Throw it!

176. CONT.

SONG (OVER)
"Well bye bye Miss American Pie
you don't have to tell me why"

THE PITCHER is angry now...okay, mister, you want the fastball. Winds up...

RON POV - sharp - a blinding fastball; he swings late and futilely as it THUDS (FX) in the catcher's mitt behind him. MOVE UP and slightly around as RON is about to say something, another pitch, but doesn't...in the silence except for the radio song, he tosses aside the bat...starts to wheel away...the KIDS watch in background, now turn away, a low murmur...one of the BOYS intersecting him.

BOY
(curious)
Hey - were you in Vietnam?

RON
Yeah.

The BOY looks at his chair, back at RON.

BOY
You sign up?

RON
Yeah.

BOY
Why?

2nd BOY
(approaching)
Hey, lay off, Richie, lay off.

RON
No. That's okay...I signed up 'cause...

OTHER KIDS have gathered around...he looks at them, stuck, back to the first BOY -

RON
'Cause I believed in this country.

ANOTHER ANGLE - the KIDS look at each other.

176. CONT.

X

1st BOY
Did you kill anybody over there?

His question curious, awe in his voice.

RON - confused, then:

RON
Yeah...yeah, I killed somebody.

4th BOY
Did you shoot any babies, that kinda stuff?

5th BOY
How many gooks did you kill?

RON feels himself overwhelmed now, pulling away, tense.

RON
(amiable)
I don't want to talk about it, okay -

OVERHEAD ANGLE - RON diverging from the KIDS, who filter away, the MUSIC THEME over

dissolving

EXT. 2nd 4th OF JULY PARADE - DAY (1968)

177. A BANNER flapping in the breeze:

WELCOME HOME RON KOVIC AND DANNY FANTOZZI...
SUPPORT OUR BOYS IN VIETNAM.

Silence, surreal, then NOISE:

JULY 4, PARADE - MASSAPEQUA, harking back to the nighttime parade sequence when Ron was a young boy. But now it is a harsh summer sun - DAY - burnt out streets. A glare...THE CROWD shading its eyes from the glare - a tension in the air.

THE HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND is almost past...a DRUM FX in the distance...something coming up the street.

177. CONT.

THE SOFT PURR of a big white CADILLAC CONVERTIBLE moving down Broadway, FX of this SOUND strong in surrounding SILENCE as we MOVE UP into the car and see a LEGION DRIVER and LEGION COMMANDER, both in peaked hats, waving to the crowd...and MOVING:

into the back seat - RON and DANNY FANTOZZI; Ron looking out at the crowd with a tight, nervous smile. A flag is draped across the back of the car...

PAST THE 7 & 11 STORE which is open for business - TEENAGERS coming in and out with purchases, pointing... PAST THE CROWD, silent, few of them waving, just staring at the two of them like ghosts come back from the dead - uneasy; an aquarium feeling with the yellows of the sun bouncing off the Massapequa architecture...PAST Sparky the Barber's and SPARKY in his barber's uniform waving (one of the few)...

RON watching...DRUMS in background...once he was staring from this sidewalk, up at his heroes. Now he is the hero - and he's a Martian.

FANTOZZI
(a nervous laugh)
Hey, maybe our banner dropped in the street someplace and they don't know who we are?

RON
(edgy)
Maybe we should stand up, they could see us better...why don't you get on my back...

Fantozzi giggling.

178. A LITTLE BOY at the edge of the sidewalk turns to his sympathetic-looking MOTHER.

LITTLE BOY
Who are they, Mom?

MOM
(in conjunction with the silence, low key)
They were wounded in Vietnam, shhhhh...

A beat. The little boy looking back at them, worshipful.

178. CONT.

LITTLE BOY
When I grow up, can I be in the parade like them?

MOM
(looking at the car, instinctively pulling her child closer)
You wouldn't want to be like them, Bobby.

cut

EXT. 2nd FOURTH OF JULY CEREMONY - DAY (1969)

179. A WOODEN PLATFORM with red, white, blue bunting. POLITICIANS, DIGNITARIES.... THE LEGION COMMANDER at the podium is a vigorous middle-aged portly man of Korean vintage, speaking effectively with gestures and rolling rhythms.

LEGION COMMANDER
Today is July the Fourth and I believe in America!....and I believe in Americanism.

THE CROWD fighting the heat and the glare. A FATHER catching his 6 year old son and spanking him hard.

FATHER
I told you never to do that!

RON and DANNY off in a corner on the platform; DANNY has one leg missing and uses crutches, sitting in a wooden chair. RON looking out into the crowd seeing

HIS FAMILY close to the platform, MOM and DAD holding hands...with TOMMY, BILLY, MAGGIE, JAN....

LEGION COMMANDER (OVER)
- and most of all, most of all, I believe in victory for America. Some people are starting to say the war is bad, is evil, that America is the bad guy. Well, this might be fashionable in some newspapers and magazines and fancy places like Harvard and Yale - but who're the kids who are defending their right to dissent - US!

A GROUP of BUSINESSMEN watching - silent.

179. CONT.

A GROUP of TEENAGERS - equally silent.

LEGION COMMANDER, continues OVER:

COMMANDER
...the kids from Massapequa and all the little towns across the country, the kids who can't afford to go to colleges and stay out of the draft, the kids who gotta go to work for a living when they're out of high school, kids who respect their flag, their parents, their Government, and their religion... kids like Joey Walsh...

THE PARENTS of Joey Walsh, a mid-40's blue-collar couple, looking down.

COMMANDER (OVER)
Danny Topinka...Billy Vorsovich...

A WITHERED WOMAN with her equally pale DAUGHTER, like a Wyeth painting.

COMMANDER (OVER)
Phil and Larry Powell...

The Woman makes a shivering gesture of the head, like a wounded bird.

LEGION COMMANDER - very emotional now.

COMMANDER
...and Tommy Finelli...six boys from Massapequa, all of them knew what honor, duty, and sacrifice meant...

RON listening - ironic he is not dead.

COMMANDER (OVER)
...they paid the highest price, they died for it.

CROWD AND COMMANDER -

COMMANDER (OVER)
This town's been hit hard, it's always been hit hard...ask Doc over there, he was in the First
(MORE)

179. CONT.

COMMANDER (OVER contd)
War, a lot of us were in the Second, and Mayor Vorishak and me were in Korea...and that's just why we can't give up, that's why we're gonna win in Vietnam... because...because Massapequa's been there before and because of those six wonderful boys and...
(voice quivering, pointing his finger)
and because of them!

RON AND DANNY; Ron inclines his head and stares into his lap.

THE CROWD quiet - fighting the heat and the glare.

COMMANDER motioning.

COMMANDER
Ron, come on up here and say a few words...would you, please?
(to crowd)
Ron Kovic, folks, was born on the Fourth of July, 1946 - so let's give him a big hand on this great birthday...

RON looking at DANNY - why does he have to speak? APPLAUSE, OFF.

SHARP LOW ANGLE with FX SOUND - as HANDS move reluctantly onto the wheels of the chair and spin it towards the podium where the COMMANDER waits...across squeaky wooden flooring, bumping, SOUND magnified with the tension he feels in the chair.

180. RON moving to the podium in FG with CROWD in BG - the first time he has addressed a crowd, very nervous.

RON - shifts in his seat, making nervous fluttering movements.

RON
I - uh - just want to say...for all the guys over in Vietnam...

Making flurries of movement - hands to chest, to belly, onto wheel.

RON
...that we're....doing our best...

180. CONT.

Gulps hard, suddenly, as if trying to breathe...more and more hesitant, a circle closing tighter and tighter on itself.

MOM putting away her tiny little U.S. flag, looking at DAD, both of them concerned; they sense something is coming.

RON

RON
...and the boys' morale over there is real high...and...

HE GULPS HARD again, the wave rising up involuntarily from his belly area, his hands going there, surprised and writhing in his seat, trying to find a more comfortable position.

RON
and you can be, you can be real...

His head drops forward, he gulps, he vomits all over himself and onto the floor.

ANOTHER ANGLE - linking RON and the CROWD - the horrible humiliation, the silence, broken only by a HACKING SOUND as he spits out the last of the drivel.

THE CROWD - disgust, pity, empathy.

MOM turning her eyes away, pained, supported by DAD who murmurs something.

THE COMMANDER and DIGNITARIES looking at one another, stunned; the Commander easing over to help RON. DANNY, on his crutches, also coming over.

RON
(the microphone still on)
I'm sorry...I really am...I'm sorry...

Almost crying.

COMMANDER
That's...
(the microphone goes out)

THE COMMANDER wheeling RON off, past the banner: WELCOME HOME OUR VIETNAM VETERANS RON KOVIC AND DANNY FANTOZZI.

cut

181. RON is wheeled down the sidewalk away from the platform by DAD, while MOM tries to wipe away the more evident signs of vomit with a handkerchief.

RON
(nervous)
Okay, Mom, it's okay...

Takes the handkerchief from her embarrassed as the CROWD watches, wipes at it himself as a VOICE yells out -

VOICE
Ronnie! Ronnie!...Ronnie!

Ron, hearing it, would rather not respond, but then sees:

TIMMY emerging from the crowd - with a loose-fitting Marine fatigue shirt on.

TIMMY
Ronnie!

Moving.

RON under his breath, shocked.

RON
Timmy?

TIMMY
O' Jesus man!

HUGS Ron really tight, burying his face in his shoulder. The CROWD watching in background.

RON
(over Timmy's shoulder)
When'd you get out...I heard you -

As Timmy pulls back, Ron is shocked:

TIMMY - his face bright red, stained with tears, the same boyish look, light skin, freckles, but a SCAR now, like a clean crack in an eggshell, all the way across his forehead. Timmy is shaking his head.

TIMMY
Man, I....Man I....Man I.....
(chokes)

THE CROWD, curious, pressing closer.

TIMMY feeling their stares, looks back at RON who is silent looking at his friend's scar.

181. CONT.

TIMMY
C'mon, let's get out of here...
(to Ron's DAD)
Let me help, Mr. Kovic.

DAD
Yeah, sure, Timmy....

As TIMMY takes the back handles of the chair and begins pushing him

THROUGH THE CROWD - a silence as people part for them... the two cripples, one pushing the other, forging their own parade.

cut

EXT. KOVIC BACKYARD & PORCH - DAY (1969)

182. NIGHT - RON and TIMMY, in semi-shadow, on Ron's back porch, late...drinking beer, insect sounds, the moon drifting by...

RON
(pointing)
You see that hedge? Right over there?

TIMMY
Yeah...?

RON
...that second telephone pole?

TIMMY
(now recognizing it)
Oh yeah...yeah.

RON
Yeah, I used to hit 60 home runs over that hedge; I think I counted every one of them.

TIMMY
Yeah, you were the best, Ronnie, the best I ever saw. You shoulda gone to that tryout for the Yankees...when that....

RON
(smiling)
...tag?...remember...in Sally's woods?

182. CONT.

TIMMY
(smiling as he remembers, soft)
...tag on Hamilton Avenue...

RON
(echoing)
...tag on the river...

TIMMY
...tag on the roof...

RON
...tag in the supermarket...

TIMMY
That day, I cut my wrist?

RON
You slipped on an acorn or something...

TIMMY
I slipped on an acorn? Yeah I cut my artery and I thought I was going to die fosure.
(giggles)

RON
(chuckling like a little kid)
You were a mess...That time you hit that foul ball right into ole Mrs. Brinks' window and she came out screaming, remember?

TIMMY
Yeah - but then we painted her fire hydrant pink...

RON
And she called the cops!

TIMMY
Yeah...an' my old man really beat the shit out of me!

Laughing. A pause.

RON
I wonder what happened to her.

182. CONT.

TIMMY
Dead I hope.

RON
I wonder what happened to Donna?

TIMMY
Donna Peters, oh yeah -- oooh, nice right? I hear she's living in New York City....

RON
Yeah?

TIMMY
...going to school.

RON
(embarrassed)
I used to write to her, y'know... long letters from Nam. Real crazy stuff, y'know...how much I loved her, and everything...God!

TIMMY
She write back?

RON
(a gesture)
Kind of. Couple of times. I don't know. I guess I sounded like an asshole.

Shrugs, looks away -

Who else used to play?

TIMMY
You know...

RON
Come on, tell me.

He wants to hear the names again.

TIMMY
Well, let's see, Bobby Moore at first, Harry Silvanti at short, Grady Rogers third...

RON
No! No! Rogers got sick... it was Finelli at third.

182. CONT.

TIMMY
...Yeah, you're right! Tommy Finelli. He hit .512 one year. I remember that year, yeah... He got hit near Chu Lai, you know. He was in the First...an RPG... just blew him away....they couldn't even find him.

RON
Rick Jones in left...Billy Vorsovich in right, he could hit, he had the power!

TIMMY
Yeah, but he was always flunking English.
(starts to giggle)
He had a hard time with English. You know he got killed by one of his own mortars up at the DMZ.
(giggling)
That's really crazy man.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Ron can't help it, starts to laugh too - the kind of laugh with hysteria in the eye of it.

RON
Shit!...and Phil and Larry Powell? I can't believe it...

TIMMY
They were great wrestlers, weren't they fucking tough...You know when Phil got killed...Larry - he wasn't too much in the brains department either - he went and joined up the next day.

RON
(laughing harder)
Oh God!

TIMMY
...And then he got it
(makes a sound of an explosion)
they couldn't find him either. You know it's funny. I think the whole fucking town got devastated. I don't think we have a fucking friend left. I think it's really funny.

182. CONT.

They laugh again.

MOM comes to the window, smiling...glances at them, then disappears.

RON
Yeah, yeah - when'd you get hit?

TIMMY
Hunh?...Oh, September 18 - near Dong Ha....you?

RON
Me. Oh January 20, someplace I don't even remember...near some river...I was running around like ...it was the woods again, like I was John Wayne - you know - "otat tat tat tat come on Charlie Mother-fucker!" like I knew I was going to get it, right?...
(unbelieving)
and then there was this crack right above my right ear and...
(shifts, sighs)

TIMMY
How was the hospital?

RON
Bad. Really sucked.

TIMMY
Yeah. I know. Sometimes I get these really bad headaches you know and I'm thinking the dummies in the hospital - they put this plate in backwards or something, man - like I'm going crazy you know, they just come over me...they just come...and I feel like - like somebody else.

RON
How do you handle it? How do you take care of it when that happens?

TIMMY
(giggles)
Well mostly I do a lot of drugs.

182. CONT.

RON
When I was in the hospital - I kept thinking it wasn't so bad, y'know, it was okay, it made sense....

TIMMY
Whaddaya mean it made sense?

RON
I mean - I wanted to go over there you know and be a big hero and everything and....
(takes a deep breath)

TIMMY
What's the matter? Ronnie - you don't....

RON
I killed him. I shot a man in my own unit. A kid. He was from Georgia...I shot him in the throat.

TIMMY
Jesus! O Jesus! Fuck -

RON
Yeah.....You're the first person I ever told that to....the Major? - he didn't even want to believe me.

TIMMY
Fuck -

RON
Yeah and I was lying in the hospital all these months I kept thinking it was right you know - for killing Wilson - it was right, what I got I deserved, cause the verdict was in - guilty, guilty of murder - and the punishment? The punishment for the crime was solitary confinement of the body. My body. For life!....Life imprisonment...It made sense.

A pause.

TIMMY
(supportive)
Ronnie - that's not true, that's not true.

182. CONT.

RON
And then - and then there's times I wish....I just wished I'd....

TIMMY
It was insane, Ronnie.

RON
- I'd just wished I'd lain down that day - the first time when I got hit, when I took the shot in the heel, I could have just stayed there you know, I had the million dollar wound, I mean who gives a fuck if I was a coward or not, I was castrated that day - why? Because I was so stupid - and I'd have my dick and my balls now and I think...I think I'd give everything I got....everything - all my values - just to have my body again...just to be whole again....

A look between them.

RON
...but I still shot that guy in the throat...and I can't feel anything from the chest down, and that's the way it is, isn't it?

TIMMY doesn't answer.

cut

EXT/INT. STEVIE'S CADDY/BOYERS & STREET - DAY (1969)

183. RON being driven in an Eldorado Cadillac by STEVIE - through a MASSAPEQUA street - STEVE has longer hair now, a thick mustache, the beginnings of a paunch under his leather jacket.

STEVE
...You tell somebody you're back from Vietnam and they think you got some kind of rare disease, y'know like you're gonna whip out a bayonet or something or stick a needle up your arm -

183. CONT.

RON smiling at the analogy.

STEVE
(angry)
Yeah - they don't really give a shit about the war; it's a million miles away to them and it's bull-shit anyway. The Government sold us a bill of goods and we bought it - and we got the shit kicked out of us.

RON
(a soft reminder)
Whaddaya mean 'we', Steve? You were in college.

STEVE
Hey - I mean we all <u>believed</u> it, Ron, whether we joined up or not. We bought it lock stock and barrel - and it was a sellout and we were suckers - and we all know it.

ANOTHER ANGLE - RON listening, quiet.

STEVE (OVER)
(sighs)
...well, it's a price war now.

184. Pulling the car over -

PAST THE SIGN - "BOYER'S"...cars, customers - a mist wrapped around the windows.

cut

INT. BOYER'S KITCHEN - DAY (1969)

185. STEVE is showing RON through the impeccable KITCHEN, past hurrying white-aproned teenage employees, pointing to

HAMBURGER PATTIES - a row of them, all donut shaped with a hole in the middle; a cook's HANDS preparing them as

STEVE approaches with RON.

STEVE
See...here - the hole in the patty? It gets us 12 patties to the pound instead of 10.

185. CONT.

RON looking. STEVE moving towards

ANOTHER PAIR OF HANDS stuffing the hole in the patty with condiments, and covering it with a pickle.

STEVE (OVER)
See, we stuff the hole with lettuce, tomatoes, onions, spices, a secret sauce - and cover it up with a pickle...here, try it...

STEVE handing RON a finished burger; Ron holds it.

STEVE
- no waiters, no tips...and cheap!

RON
Yeah. You was always smart, Steve.

Ron taking a bite out of it. Not bad.

CUSTOMER FACES shuffling up to the counter, one after the other, receiving the nicely packaged result.

STEVE (OVER)
Yeah, down the street, they get a better burger, better beef, for three beans. It's a better burger but I don't break their arms to get 'em in here.

STEVE MOVING - RON FOLLOWING, past the French fry vats.

STEVE
But they'd rather eat my stuff at a dollar six 'cause it's packaged nice, it's cheap and it's clean and the place looks fucking clean.

Intersecting a GIRL scrubbing the aluminum ovens.

186. INT. BOYER'S OFFICE AREA - DAY (1969)

TO an INNER OFFICE with telephone, scrawled notes, pictures on a wall addressing business groups, receiving an award. A magnetized football game, a TV set. Pointing to a map on the wall:

STEVE
Even Massapequa real estate values have zoomed, prices've gone through
(MORE)

186. CONT.

STEVE (contd)
the roof. The whole country's changed, Ron. It's not a Mom and Pop operation anymore. Look at McDonald's, Colonel Sanders... Copiague, Jericho, Bayville, Valley Stream - I wanna push out, Ron. I wanna make "Boyer's" a whole Long Island thing, y'know. I want something better for the people of Long Island than McDonald's.

Ron nods, putting down the half-eaten hamburger on Steve's desk.

STEVE
I want you to put the war behind you and come and work for me... I'll start you at 1000 a month.

RON - surprised.

RON
Oh Steve, that's real nice of you but -

STEVE
(sincere, concerned)
This is the time right now to get in on it, Ron. I think in a few years with hard work - you could be a rich man...a manager, then a franchise -

RON
That's real nice of you, Steve, but y'know, I get 1,700 a month from the Government and I just want to look around a bit right now, y'know?

STEVE
You gotta keep busy Ron, you gotta forget about that chair...you could sit behind a desk, on a phone... warehousing...

RON
No....no, Steve.

STEVE
I could even....

186. CONT.

RON
No...I just need some time, y'know.

A spasm rocks his shoulders, ravaging him momentarily. He rides it out, off the shoulders.

STEVE
You okay?...
(a worried grin)

RON
Yeah...it's okay...lemme think about it, okay Steve? I gotta move on now, I gotta go...

STEVE
Okay, sure, take your time.

187. RON nods - wheels out past the kitchen.

STEVE, MOVING - a look off at Ron, somewhat disappointed, and worried.

cut

MONTAGE - united by the MUSIC THEME.

EXT. RON'S "TRACK" STREET - DAY (1969)

188. RON in a t-shirt races along a near empty AVENUE in Massapequa - DAY...in a sweat now.

COMES AROUND a block, still going all out...stops, breathing hard...turns, starts back.

cut

189. OMIT

190. INT. JUNIOR COLLEGE CLASS - DAY (1969)

RON sitting in a classroom, surrounded by people who look much younger listening as

A TEACHER speaks, under the MUSIC - literary names and dates scrawled on the blackboard - Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, "Ego" circled with an arrow to "Id", with Moby Dick written next to it.

STUDENTS taking page after page of notes, MOVING TO RON who has a near empty notebook in front of him.

190A. EXT. JUNIOR COLLEGE - DAY (1969)

AUTUMN in the trees as STUDENTS mill around a junior COMMUNITY COLLEGE....RON rolls out, past a mock RECRUITING STAND with 2 LONG-HAIRED BOYS and A GIRL in Marine uniforms - "Sign Up Right Here - Vacation in Sunny Vietnam"... Ron ignoring it.

191. OMIT

192. EXT. KOVIC BACKYARD/PORCH - DAY (1970)

RON exercising again - doing strenuous pullups on a special low-slung bar in his BACKYARD...15, 16....17.

193. INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - NIGHT (1970)

RON reading in his bed at night with a small lamp on, the wind hitting up against the window - "All Quiet On The Western Front" by Remarque.

193A. INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - DAY (1970)

RON making his own bed in his room in the MORNING.

194. INT. ARTHUR'S BAR - DAY (1970)

RON shooting a game of pool at "Arthur's" bar - AFTERNOON, uncrowded.

195. EXT. MASSAPEQUA MOVIE - NIGHT (1970)

RON coming out of a MOVIE THEATER, alone, surrounded by a young crowd, couples talking and sharing the movie... he wheels away past a poster for "Love Story" with McGraw and O'Neill.

195A. INT. JUNIOR COLLEGE HALL - DAY (1970)

RON rolling down a SCHOOL CORRIDOR, past people dressed like his brothers and sisters in long hair, looking especially at the girls going by in groups chattering - reminiscent of his high school days and a time he walked down the corridor and they stared at him. Now he is unnoticed...Up to a BOARD with exam results posted.

ANOTHER ANGLE - his eyes moving down the list...and down - and finding it.

196. INT. KOVIC LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (SUMMER 1970)

RON watching television at home with DAD, JAN, and MOM, darning a sock, next to him.

197. TV INSERT CLIP - "Laugh In"

198. INT. KOVIC LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (SUMMER 1970)

RON, bored with television now, wheels out.

199. OMIT

200. INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - NIGHT (1970)

RON prepares for bed - adjusting the pillows and spread.

201. IN THE BATHROOM - emptying his urine bag in the toilet bowl.

202. HOOKING his catheter up to the urine bag now hanging from a metal post next to the bed...

CLOSING the light...and lying there, unable to sleep.

INT. KOVIC LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (1970)

203. RON wheeling into a darkened LIVING ROOM.

ON THE TELEPHONE - asking a question, noting the answer on a pad...a rain beating at the windows.

RON waiting for the person at the other end to answer, taut, about to hang up, then the person answers...with hesitation he introduces himself....the response....the heightening of a smile on his face...

INT. TRAIN - DAY (1970)

204. RON on the TRAIN, the platforms of Penn Station and its greenish fishlights bypassing his window...ill at ease in his best shirt, tie, jacket.

INT. STATION PLATFORM - DAY (1970)

205. RON coming out of the train onto the PLATFORM - looking ...not there.

206. PASSENGERS hurrying to the exit ramps, then: DONNA appears coming the other way - looking for him. She has grown into a very beautiful, tall, lean blonde woman.

RON seeing her - before she sees him. A leap of the soul. As if for one moment he can stretch up out of the chair and walk to her again.

DONNA sees him, across exiting PASSENGERS - a flash in her eyes, starts towards him, as if also suspending her disbelief...

206. CONTD.

HER POV - PAST exiting PASSENGERS - then RON appears on the platform, fully revealed in the chair...

DONNA continuing - but a flash of the head, the inner collapse of spirit. It <u>is</u> him.

RON, smiling now, friendly - as SHE approaches, stretching his arm in a comradely fashion, holding her - as they kiss hello. Donna muted, smiling - saying something. He nods.

dissolving to

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT (1970)

207. RON and DONNA having a quiet dinner in a RESTAURANT -

RON
(grinning)
Yeah...the night we sneaked away, remember? You kissed me. That was the first time.

DONNA
No - it was the night of the baseball hat - when I gave it to you, the Fourth of July? It was your birthday.

RON
That was the same night.

DONNA
(pause)
Yes...yes, you're right - you remember? You never used to.

RON
No. Never...in the hospital, in the war.

DONNA
The night of the prom?

RON
Boy was I crazy that night! Running through the rain to get there...to dance with you.

DONNA nodding, sharing his spirit.

207. CONT.

RON
I just had to dance with you 'fore I went in, y'know I just had to dance with you...it was like I knew it.

A shift of mood. He pulls back.

RON
Remember those letters?....

Donna remembering.

RON
(embarrassed)
Crazy stuff, hunh? Long letters. I guess I told you a lot of stuff I couldn't tell you in high school.

DONNA
They were beautiful letters.

RON
Yeah?

DONNA
(moved)
They were...

RON
I don't think the spelling was too good.

DONNA
But there was a lot of feeling in the words...
(her expression shifting)
it's funny the way...

RON
What?

DONNA
The way feelings changed - about the war.

RON
Yeah.

Starting to eat.

cut

EXT. UPPER WESTSIDE STREET - NIGHT (1970)

208. DONNA pushes RON down a CITY STREET, the upper West Side. Past Chinese restaurants, Puerto Rican food stands, shoemaker window fronts -

RON
I've been thinking of leaving.

DONNA
Massapequa?

RON
Yeah, I feel like getting out. Seeing a bit of the world.

DONNA
Where?

RON
West. South. South America, maybe. Some place far, some place in the sun.

DONNA
For how long?

RON
Maybe a long time
(looks at her)
and you?

DONNA
What?

RON
What are you gonna do with yourself?

DONNA
Oh, I got two more years of law school; the first year's the worst though, you go blind. I never had to read so much in my life. End of the day I pass out before my head hits the pillow.

RON
Yeah, must be rough...you seeing anybody?

DONNA
Yes...someone. I've been living with him 'bout a year now.

208. CONT.

RON
Oh?

DONNA
He's a student. At Columbia. He's brilliant, he's poor - very interested in politics - in changing things.

RON
Yeah?

DONNA
Yeah. He took me down to Washington last month, the first time I've ever been to a demonstration..... to stop the war. It really works, you know? It was incredible - the vibes.

RON
Yeah?

DONNA
You should go down to one, Ron. You could help, really.

RON
Me?

DONNA
You.

RON
Was he over there, this....friend of yours?

DONNA
No - but he feels very strongly about it...

RON nodding his head.

DONNA
...so do I.

EXT. DONNA'S BUILDING & STREET - NIGHT (1970)

209. ANOTHER ANGLE - coming to the stoop of an old apartment house.

DONNA
Well, here it is.

209. CONT.

RON
(looking)
Looks nice. It's cozy.

DONNA
Why don't you come up - meet him? He's a wonderful guy, you'll like him....
(in afterthought)
there's an elevator in -

RON
No - maybe some other time, you know?

DONNA
You sure? You can get home all right?

RON
Home? Sure! - just take a cab.

Ruffles her up.

RON
Take care of yourself hunh - don't go get yourself knocked up or anything -

DONNA
Oh no....no -

Extends his hand.

RON
Well - good to see you....

The handshake turns into a restrained hug....the eye contact over, RON pulling away, DONNA in background lit by the yellowish bulb in the corridor of the apartment building.

cut

EXT. ARTHUR'S BAR & STREET - NIGHT (1970)

210. ARTHUR'S BAR - MASSAPEQUA - late NIGHT. Disco music, lights...COUPLES necking in their cars, doors slamming, stumbling, SHOUTING matches between disillusioned lovers -

INT. ARTHUR'S BAR - NIGHT (1970)

211. INTERIOR - red lights, big space, long bar, a back room.

211. CONT.

Psychedelic lights PRESENTING MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE - a Creedence Clearwater Revival "SUSY Q" type sound, amplified bass beat - a young local group, all seven in their teens, with long long hair, sullen demeanors... their gals dancing in strapless tops, chewing gum; working class mamas with short hair in green t-shirts ("Sure I raise Hell. So What?") and black shiny slacks; the papas in jeans, a hint of Presley in their hip rolls as they dance' college boys swilling beer in sweat shirts with signs on them, 'Olympic Drinking Team', sockless loafers, long sideburns, the hair getting longer...

212. THE BACK ROOM - tougher looking types playing pool, cigarettes to lips and backs of ears...a GIRL with a limp and jeans, moving to the edge of the table, lining up a shot, a tattoo on her hands.

213. RON is in his chair on the outside of a corner booth with TIMMY, several beer pitchers in front of them.

With them are two tough-looking GUYS in their 40's, crewcuts, windbreakers with 'Brigadeer Factory Renegades Baseball Team' written across the back. A sign on the wall over them: 'If you're Drinking To Forget, Pay Before You Start.'

RON
(a glassy look, stupid)
...and that's what I'm gonna tell them. I'm gonna go to this little town in Georgia and they're all gonna be sitting in a room - his mom, his dad, his wife - and I'm gonna look em in the eye and tell em I killed your son - and I killed your husband and that's where I shot him. Right there!
(pointing at his neck)
Right through the fucking throat!

TIMMY
Okay, Ronnie, come on, knock it off.

RON
...and I'm sorry but it was all a fucking waste of time and he died for no good fucking reason. I'm sorry but you can take Vietnam and shove it up your ass....
(giggling)
that's what the hospital guy said, 'you can take your Vietnam and shove it up your ass'.

213. CONT.

MAN #1
(yelling at the waiter)
Double rye, beer chaser....I tellya it was the wrong fucking war to begin with...

Man #2 is sullen, off to the side, an edge of drunkenness. As Ron glassily looks over at

214. THE DANCE FLOOR - a slow tune now, sad Johnny Cash type lyrics, the couples shuffling head to head. MOVING DOWN to their feet, & beat,

215. RON turning back to TIMMY - unconsciously itching his own nipple.

RON
Remember Del Shannon - "Runaway?"
(crooning)
"As I walk along
I wonder what went wrong
with our love
A love that was so strong
awhoo whoo whooo whooo whoo!"
'Wrong fucking war !'
(back to Man #1)
Right! It was the wrong fucking war when you gotta shoot somebody on your own side...right in the throat...
(going again, repeating and repeating it till it leaves him alone)
right there...that's where I shot him....And I watched him die...

MAN #2
(erupting suddenly)
O fuck you!

Ron looking at him slowly.

RON
What?

ANOTHER ANGLE - RON and MAN # 2

MAN #2

Just 'cause you're in a fucking wheelchair, you think everybody's gotta feel sorry for you.

215. CONT.

Ron shocked. The man's anger is very real, and sudden.

MAN #2
So you killed your own man in combat. So what! That happens all the time. But Marines, they don't cry about it. I was a Marine in Korea. They fight! They don't think. They fight - and if you were in the wrong fucking war and you lost your legs, too fucking bad! You're a Marine, they didn't pick you, you - you picked them so stop moaning about it!

215. CONT.

RON
(to Timmy)
Who is that guy!
(pointing his finger across the table at the guy)
But did it ever happen to you...
did you ever kill your own man?

ANOTHER ANGLE - MAN #2 looks away, unable to answer.

CLOSE RON - leaning further forward, intent.

RON
Did YOU?...did you kill your own man?

Poking towards the man's chest.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MAN #2 brushes aside Ron's finger.

RON
Did YOU?...Did YOU?

TIMMY
(soft)
Hey Ron -

WAITER coming over...various DANCERS adjacent have stopped and are looking.

WAITER
Okay you guys break it up.

RON
(to Man #2)
Why don't you try it some time.

MAN #2
(rising)
Shit!

Walks away. A beat.

RON
(to his back)
Asshole...

MAN #2 turns.

MAN #2
Man, if you weren't in that fucking chair...

215. CONT.

RON rolling fast towards him.

RON
Well, I am in the fucking chair, so come on, motherfucker -

WAITER
(moving fast between the two)
HEY - KNOCK IT OFF, BOTH OF YOU!

MAN #2 shrugs contemptuously, leaves...MAN #1 following.

RON upset, breathing hard.

cut

INT. ARTHUR'S BAR - NIGHT (1970)

216. RON rolling past the dance floor to the jukebox, a bottle of beer in hand, desperately aggressive now; at the jukebox, a lovely GAL, 19, shaking her ass, picking records.

RON
Hey, what's happening? What's your name?

TIMMY
(following)
C'mon, Ronnie, let's go.

GIRL
(chewing gum, relaxed)
Jenny.

TIMMY
...Ronnie?

RON
Lemme alone, go find somebody, will you...Jenny? Jenny, how'd you like to go to South America tonight?

Timmy drifts off.

GIRL
South America? Whadaya mean - South...?

216. CONT.

RON
I think you're really beautiful.

GIRL
Oh yeah?

RON
Yeah! Come on, come on, let's go to Guatemala.

GIRL
What do you got with Guatemala?

RON
I know this really special place, it's in the sun...on the ocean... we'll go tonight, we'll get a plane.

GIRL
I think you're crazy, man.

RON
Yeah. I am. I'm crazy. Hey, you want to dance? I can dance. I dance crazy.
(rocks around in his chair)
Come on -

cut

217. RON throwing a 'wheelie' on the dance floor, riding the back legs of his chair, like an athlete twisting and shaking his shoulders, his eyes popping open and closed, at points into the beat, sweating a lot, other times sloppy - set to "Midnight Train to Georgia".

218. STEVE coming in with a DATE, 2 OTHER GUYS and ANOTHER GIRL.

STEVE
(to a passing waiter)
Hey Bill.

BILL
Steve.

STEVE
(looking around)
What's going on?

218. CONT.

BILL
Oh - same old shit. Everybody's fucking and sucking.

STEVE laughing - then spotting RON on the floor, amazed.

STEVE
(not taking his eyes off Ron, to his date)
Let's get a table -

219. GIRL spinning.

GIRL
Bet you practiced a lot?

RON
Yeah...crazy!

Looking at her.

BREASTS bob as she dances.

RON, more and more agitated, takes one of her hands and spins her around his head - as STEVE AND COMPANY INTERSECT in background on their way to a table, not seeing them...then spins his arm over her head, showing off some more...

POPS a big "wheelie" and

CRASHES onto the floor

219A. HIS HEAD hitting the base of a table.

VOICE 1
You okay...you all right?

VOICE 2
Is he okay?

VOICE 3
Him again?

STEVE'S VOICE
Hey Ron?...Ron?

Looking upwards groggily.

HIS POV - STEVE and TIMMY leaning over him, Steve predominart in the frame, Timmy more receded -

219A. CONT.

RON now crawls along the floor, reaching for his toppled chair. HANDS reaching in to help; he shakes them off.

RON
Lemme alone...I can do it. Where's my chair? Gimme my chair.

THE FACES looking at him -

TIMMY
Leave him alone.

VOICE
(distant)
Get'im the fuck outta here, he's drunk...get'im home.

VOICE
(distant)
It's okay, it's okay...he got hurt over in 'Nam -

STEVE
(leaning in closer)
Ron? Lemme help?

RON dragging himself up into the chair, a painful muscular movement, shaking his head.

RON
(gasps)
Leave me the fuck alone!

Stalls, strains - then pulls himself in....his head bobbing sickly from side to side.

RON
(murmuring)
You fucks...you fucks...

STEVE'S VOICE
Go get the car, Denny.

cut

EXT. ARTHUR'S BAR & STREET - NIGHT (1970)

220. RON, shitfaced, is lifted into Steve's CAR, a big Cadillac with room for 3 on the front seat, Ron in the middle propped up - FIGURES around him, lost in shifting shadow...RAINING now...doors slamming.

220. CONT.

STEVE
Hurry up, let's go!

TIMMY
You okay?

221. ANOTHER ANGLE - RON being propped up again on the seat ...the car MOVING - windshield wipers.

STEVE
That's right, that's good now.

A girl LAUGHING.

VOICE 1
Shut up, willya Janet.

RON
(overlapping)
Who is this chick?

TIMMY
Are you okay - is everything all right?

STEVE'S VOICE
He's really smashed, we got to get him home right away.

RON
(at Steve)
Y'know this car looks like shit, Steve - you got no taste! You suck.

STEVE
Fuck you.

Ron grins, leaning over on a SHOULDER with imitation fur, bleary-eyed.

RON
I wanna make love to you...have babies, lots of babies...go to your place...

GIRL'S VOICE
Whatza he saying?

TIMMY
Howza his legs, his legs okay?

221. CONT.

GIRL'S VOICE
FUCK!

THE GIRL has her mouth open in astonishment.

GIRL
He's pissed all over the fucking seat!
(moving)
Look, my dress! Oh God, how dey gonna clean dis dress? Two hundred...

TIMMY
SHADDUP!

VOICE 1
Hey you asshole, you just peed all over Janet's dress!

RON
How 'bout dat! Whatza address?

VOICE 1
What!...what'd he say?

STEVE'S VOICE
Leave 'im alone, he's drunk.

VOICE 1
(insane paranoid)
Get the bum home! Get him home! Drop him off! I don't want to see him!

TIMMY
Awright awright...

cut

EXT. KOVIC HOUSE & STREET - NIGHT (1970)

222. RON is soaking wet in the rain, wheeling up the ramp alone and BANGING through the front door.

INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - NIGHT (1970)

223. HE THUMPS against a wall in his ROOM, muttering something incomprehensible.

RON
Shitzagod fuckout!

Coming face to face with himself in the MIRROR - and the CRUCIFIX ('Let the Beauty of Jesus be seen in me')...a crazed concentrated look, sweat, rain, a bruise from the forehead where he fell...he can't stand himself - gropes for the crucifix, lurches, grasps it with loud FX as:

MOM comes in, wrapping her bathrobe, worried - followed by DAD.

MOM
What is.....?

Stops, seeing his state.

MOM
Oh God!
(to Dad)
He's drunk...he's drunk. I knew it. We have a son for a drunk...
Eli!

Dad is moving past her, ignoring her outburst, starting to prepare Ron's bed.

DAD
Go to bed, honey, it's okay.

Passing RON who is waving the crucifix at his Mom -

RON
Look Mom, look isn't that what you believe in, isn't it?

MOM
(looking away)
Eli!

RON
But I don't, I don't believe in him anymore. You know why? 'Cause he only spent 3 days up there and me I gotta spend the rest of my life. I wish I were dead like him -

MOM
Oh!
(looking away)

RON
They love dead things. They want
(MORE)

223. CONT.

RON (contd)
to stand over the grave and say nice things about why a person's dead...beautiful flowers and a big stone monument with your birth and death on it, but that's the problem Mom - I'm not dead!

ANOTHER ANGLE

MOM
(shaking her head, to Dad)
He won't listen, he won't change.

DAD
(calm, to Ron)
Ronnie - please.

RON
I gotta live. I gotta walk around and remind them of Vietnam and

MOM abruptly walks out of the room.

RON
they don't wanna know, they don't want to see us, they hate that war, they wanna hide us! They wanna hide us!

Following her out of the room.

INT. TOMMY/BILLY'S ROOM & HALL - NIGHT (1970)

224. TOMMY AND BILLY popping their sleepy heads out of their room, wondering about the commotion.

TOMMY
Whatza?

RON, thumping against a wall - chasing Mom.

RON
It isn't World War Two, it isn't Korea...no, man, that's Vietnam, that's our garbage can.

INT. KOVIC LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (1970)

225. ACROSS THE LIVING ROOM - the SISTERS coming out now, amazed.

225. CONT.

RON
...our can of shit! And who wants to know, who wants to stop and think, and you know what I am?

MOM
Stop it! Go to bed, Jan... Maggie!

RON
I'm the fucking dummy! I believed everything they told us, Mom - Go fight, go kill, conquer for this country - and I do it, I do it. Sergeant, man - Marine Corps!
(a drunken salute)
Yo, Squad left, right, lef-rye, LEF-RYE, ABOW FACE!

Hysterically sweeps the BASEBALL TROPHIES off the bookshelf.

MOM
Go to sleep...Tommy, get Billy out!

Trying to shoo them off.

RON
...and then I come back here man and the newspapers are wondering what the fuck we're doing over there, kids are calling us killers - assassins! And civilians are just walking around making a buck and when somebody reminds them, they kinda go "too bad" like it was something really pathetic! Oh, Vietnam, what a waste of time, what a silly mistake - sucker. What am I? Brainwashed!

INT. KOVIC BEDROOM & HALL - NIGHT (1970)

226. MOM, giving up with the KIDS, flees to her BEDROOM filled with religious objects, but pursued by RON, still brandishing the crucifix in one hand -

RON
What were we, sent into some kind of limbo space, some kinda fucking
(MORE)

226. CONT.

RON (contd)
time warp, why doesn't somebody tell us for Christ's sake what are we, zombies walking around and somebody's forgot to turn us off, am I a dummy 'cause I didn't go to college...where were the Senators' sons when I was over there...will somebody tell me what were we killed for, Mom...why, for what reason?...why do I have this!

ANOTHER ANGLE - unbuckling his pants and grabbing the rubber tubing taped along the inside of his thigh, shredding the tape with a loud shearing FX.

RON
This piece of meat!

MOM, shuddering, doesn't want to see it.

THE CHILDREN staring from the doorway behind RON, fascinated.

RON
This dead piece of meat...the Church they say it's a sin if you play with it, but I sure wish I could play with it, I sure wish I could.

MOM
Maggie! Get them out...Get your father!

RON
I didn't even get time to learn how to use it - 'cause it's gone in some fucking jungle over in Asia. Gone for democracy. Gone for America. Gone forever. Nobody gives....

MOM
(shrieking)
ENOUGH!

Slams the door on the CHILDREN -

227. ANOTHER ANGLE - pause. RON shifting mood.

RON
"Enough" - yeah, I know.

227. CONT.

Quietly wheels to the door of her bedroom, opens it. She's silent - braced against the door, lets him pass. He stops - off the cuff.

RON
You know Mom I never been laid.

Waits.

MOM
(repeating it without expression)
You never been laid?
(a dimming awareness)

RON
No. Not in school. Not in training. Not in Nam...not here ...no place.

MOM
(at a loss)
What do you want me to do?

A beat. He sighs, then in one powerful gesture, he SNAPS (FX) the CRUCIFIX in two pieces and

ANOTHER ANGLE - tosses the pieces at her feet.

RON
Keep it -

cut

INT. RON'S BEDROOM/BATH/HALL - NIGHT (1970)

228. RON is in bed, his head resting on his jungle pack with a knife that he uses as a pillow - attended to by his DAD who finishes removing his piss-soaked pants.

DAD undoes the rocklike rubber urine bag from the inside of his son's leg - evident it has overflowed and now

RUNS a warm washcloth along the leg, cleaning it - a stoic calm that translates to tenderness in these circumstances.

RON
(regretful, eyes closed)
I'm fucked up...I'm fucked up.

228. CONT.

DAD
Ronnie...maybe a little change of scenery...that resort down in Guatemala you were talkin' about? Maybe some rest...

RON
I don't wanna go to Guatemala. I don't wanna go no place.

DAD
(rubbing him)
What can I do Ronnie, what do you want?

RON
(murmuring)
I want a woman, Dad, I want somebody to love me....I wanna be free again. I wanna walk in the backyard on the grass. I wanna put my bare feet in the ocean. I wanna run along the sand and feel it on my feet. I wanna stand up in the shower with the hot water streaming down my legs in the morning...I wanna explode, Dad. I wanna get out of this crazy fucking body I'm in...
(about to cry)
I wanna be a man again...I just wanna be a man again.

DAD moving rigidly, now connects Ron's catheter tube to the long plastic tube that runs into the urine bag connected to the stand adjacent the bed...and closes the bedside lamp.

In the dark:

RON
(a quiet sob)
Good night Dad.....

DAD
(choked up)
Good night....son.

dissolve to

229. EXT. RESORT VILLAGE - GUATEMALA - DUSK (1970)

RESORT VILLAGE - BELICE, GUATEMALA - moving along a vista of Caribbean, rocks, beach, a scalding red sun setting over the horizon...WHEELCHAIR MEN moving along the oceanfront, LOCAL AIDES in jeans and work-shirts, some LOCAL WOMEN...MUSIC THEME.

230. EXT/INT. GUATEMALAN RESORT PATIO - DUSK (1970)

A POKER GAME on the dining hall PATIO at the center of the Village - red sun in background. Hardcore American types, exclusively paras and quads, with cowboy hats, boots, colorful clothing, and big-busted heavy local WOMEN, their skirts up, sitting on the edges of wheel-chairs, their arms thrown around their men, rubbing their tits. Piles of tens and twenties on the table; high stakes. Mexcal, tequila, rompopo, beer bottles -

VET #1
(making an irrational bet, drunk, mean)
Why don't you bet. You got all the fucking money.

VET #2
(examining his cards, folding)
Fuck you.

VET # 1
Son of a bitch - won't bet.

VET #2
(leaning back, reaching for his WOMAN, teasing VET 1)
Put your hand in my crotch baby. My fucking dick hasn't been hard in fucking months.

VET #1
Son of a bitch - won't bet -

MOVING TO RON, a spectator at the game, a beigh caddy cap, 1930's newsboy type on his head, next to CHARLIE, a little skinny guy with hairy arms and tattoos, a reckless face, drunk.

CHARLIE
Fuck the States. I'm never going back. I got my room. I got my woman. I got my bottle. That's all the fuck I need, it's simple. I want something simple. Fucking V.A. - nobody understood, nobody

(MORE)

230. CONT.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
cared. Nobody gave a shit and the women...the fucking women, They didn't even want to look at me, the goddamn fucking women. The fucking States. I ain't ever going back....
(reaching for his woman who is six months pregnant)
Come here baby, you're beautiful, ain't she beautiful.

RON
(drinking)
Yeah -

CHARLIE
Get on down to town and get yourself one, man. Fuck the shit outta you. Ain't that right, Martha?

Presses her mammoth tits. She squeals - and slaps him up on the side of the head. He grins madly.

WOMAN
You're no good.

CHARLIE
Fuckin A! You know when you're really drunk on this mezcal shit -

Producing a mezcal bottle with a dead worm floating near the quarter mark.

CHARLIE
- is when you swallow the fucking worm, and you don't even know it!

Ron laughs. A LOUD EXPLETIVE from across the table.

ANOTHER ANGLE - as VET 1 slams his losing cards on the table.

VET #1
Fuck!

VET #2, snuggling his GIRL, laughs.

VET #1
Laugh. Mother fucker - go ahead, you're gonna get yours.

230. CONT.

VET #2
(laughing)
You oughta stick to gin rummy, Meyers.

VET #1
(menacing)
Yeah? Just when you're humping that Mexican jumping bean, I'm gonna blow you away. I got a gun...I got a fucking gun...

VET #2
Sure you do, but it's stuck up your ass.

CHARLIE AND RON

CHARLIE
(drinking from bottle)
Y'ever try it with a blowdryer?

RON
(bewildered)
No...never.

CHARLIE
Try it - it ain't bad... big ass!

His WOMAN squals in staccato as he pinches her in the ass.

cut

INT. GUATEMALAN WHORE BAR - DUSK (1970)

213. SOUND - DOOR OPENING and 25 LOCAL WHORES file out, sniffing the customers...

HIGH ANGLE - BAR IN TOWN...some 20 men, local and tourist types, wait at various tables. RON is the only paraplegic, drinking tequila. The patterns in the room shift and settle as the whores sit with the chosen customers, leaving Ron conspicuously alone in the upper right corner of fram.

RON drinking, aware of his isolation.

THE PAINTED FACES, all ages...a jukebox, staircase, and upper story...now focusing on a YOUNGER GIRL, 18, snapping her pocketmirror shut at the end of the bar - not quite pretty, the body is stocky, the breasts out of proportion to the smaller size of the torso, but she has long

231. CONT.

straight black hair and a sluttish sexy look to the split up the side of her black skirt...sniffing at Ron, curious - like a mouse around a crippled cat, sensing it -

RON nervously looking away from her stare, drinking, in FOREGROUND - as she ambles towards him, her torso vanishing from our eyesight, leaving the FACE alone - a pretty face now, the eyes almond shaped, the skin young brown, caramel, a gold tooth at the front of the mouth as she leans her two palms down on the table.

WHORE
Are you from the Villa del Sol?

RON
Yeah. Yeah.

WHORE
Do you want to sleep with me?

ANOTHER ANGLE -

RON
No!...No.

She waits. Fidgeting he steals another glance at her.

RON
I...was...just....I'd just like to look around...come in....yeah I'd like to sleep with you.... yeah, yeah, I'd like to....yeah...

WHORE
Then come.

A sullen gesture of her hand and hip -

cut

232. INT. GUATEMALA WHORE ROOM - NIGHT (1970)

A TINY CUBICLE - thin walls, shadows, musty objects, a creaky, low-slung bed, a broken lamp on a wooden table, a squashed candle which she lights...shadows...her FACE coming towards him...glows...

WHORE
Dinero?

RON
Yeah how much?

232. CONT.

WHORE
Quince.

RON
Quince is how much?

Movements, paper sounds as he passes money.

RON, tense, slowly taking off his shirt on the bed, watching as

THE GIRL, glowing reddish against the curtains, takes off her clothing in a few easy gestures...comes and lies down on the bed...RON looking at her naked torso... pause.

GIRL
(indicates his pants)
Why you don't take off?

RON
I can't...I can't take them off...
(pointing to the legs)
they were paralyzed in the war.

GIRL
Vietnam?

Ron nods 'yes'. Curious she indicates his crotch, moves closer.

GIRL
I see?

RON - deeply uncomfortable.

RON
No. No...I can't move it. It's no good.

GIRL
Yes!

Moving to undo his pants' buckle.

RON
No, please!

Prevents her. The GIRL points to his chest...

GIRL
Is this?...bullet?

232. CONT.

ANOTHER ANGLE - her finger pointing to a tiny bullethole in his right shoulder, reddened scar tissue. And RON nods.

GIRL nods back. Then:

GIRL
Your cock? Can move?...can stand up?...sometimes?

RON

RON
No....never...my spine. It broke my spine.

THE GIRL - a moment. A long moment.

RON

She reaches out, touches his face gently. He closes his eyes, trying to respond to the touch. She shifts, slowly pushing her breasts towards his face. He inches his lips into them, burying his mind -

cut

HER LONG HAIR tumbles down over his face, lashing it like a wave.

She pulls downward, her breasts raking his chest.

HER HAIR trails down past his eyes which now react in surprise as

She sucks his nipple...FX sound...around and around.

HIS POV - the top of her head splayed with black hair circling in smaller and smaller patterns as

PROFILE - her LIPS make fast lizard-like steps around the nipple.

HER TWO HANDS spread upwards across RON's face...caressing, scratching...Ron responding, in a necessarily limited way, to the touch...sweat all over his chest, neck, face.

cut

FLESH MOVING

GIRL
Yes....yes!.....you good, you strong!

232. CONT.

THE GIRL arching, thrashing as he licks her off...she is muttering something like "Ay Dios! Que sigues, que bueno ...mata, mata!"

cut

RON holds the GIRL in his arms, in the candlelight, exploring her facial contours with his fingers, her eyes ....a KNOCK at the door.

VOICE
(in Spanish)
Maria Elena, time's up, let's go.

GIRL
(shouting back
in Spanish)
....ten minutes, leave me alone!

Ron, uninterrupted, gazes upon her as if the first woman ever made, worship in his eyes.

RON
(excited, shifts)
I want to show you...okay?

She nods, confused now.

MOVING to his pants - Ron beginning to undo them for the first time.

RON exposing himself OFF. THE GIRL curious, then frowns, indicating -

GIRL
This?

RON
(agitated, shaky
movements of his
hand as he indicates)
That's a condom - a rubber. It carries the urine to the tube - right here, this? See?....the tube takes it down here...right here...
(grins, nervously)
my urine bag...Nice, isn't it?

GIRL
(pause)
Is nice cock...babyskin.

232. CONT.

RON
(laughs)
Yeah, that's fosure. Never been touched.

Grabs her affectionately, kisses her.

RON
I like you -

GIRL
(snuggling him)
You come and see me tomorrow, yes, four o'clock?

RON
I promise.

GIRL
Maybe you, me - we live in the village.

RON
Yeah! We'll live right by the sea, we'll go fishing.

GIRL
(in fun)
Maybe we get married, no?

RON
Sure, why not!

GIRL
(moving off the bed)
Tomorrow yes?

RON
Tomorrow! Manana!

GIRL
Yes - manana!

EXT. RON'S QUATEMALAN BUNGALOW ST. - NIGHT (1970)

233. RON, in a happy mood, wheels back towards his casa in the VILLAGE that NIGHT. Snatches of guitars off, radios ...intersecting VET 2 from the poker game. He is motorized in an electric wheelchair, his head bobbing as he croaks a MEXICAN SONG to himself...we FOLLOW him as RON wheels past.

233. CONT.

VET 1 from the poker game is hidden away in shadow atop a cement ramp leading to one of the casas....hunched, an insane look on his face, watching....then rolls forward suddenly with a loud YELL right down the ramp - building up a burst of speed.

SLAMMING into VET 2, sideswiping and toppling his chair over. VET 2 scrabbling around in the grass as VET 1 laughs like a maniac.

VET 1
Laugh, motherfucker, why aren't you laughing now?

VET 2
You son of a bitch!

EXT/INT. GAUTEMALAN ROOM & RAMP - NIGHT (1970)

234. RON up the ramp into his CASA. Entering the living room. A whining VOICE from an adjacent room.

VOICE
Nina?...Nina? Is that you? Who's that!

RON
It's me. Ron.

VOICE
(slurring)
Is that you? Will you get somebody for me? Will you get Nina for me? Somebody?...Ron?

A detached voice, with no body. Ron, trying to ignore it, pours himself a shot from the mezcal bottle on the cheap coffee table.

cut

234A. EXT./INT. JEWELRY SHOP - GUATEMALA - DAY (1970)

THE NEXT DAY - RON peers into the cluttered window of a little JEWELRY SHOP in town - and rolls in, all excited.

235. INT. GUATEMALA WHORE BAR - DAY (1970)

RON wheeling into the BAR of the same WHOREHOUSE later THAT DAY, intersecting the MANAGERESS.

235. CONT.

RON
Por favor? Maria Elena?

MANAGERESS
She upstairs now, she come down ...beer?

RON
Mezcal.

cut

MOVING to RON waiting at a table with a bottle of mezcal - a gift-wrapped jewel case on the table in front of him, which he picks up, holding as

THE BARTENDER mixes margaritas, and the WHORES at the bar glance at him.

THE GIRL now comes down the stairs...

RON looking as

HIS POV - She is now followed by a PORTLY AMERICAN who good-naturedly reaches over and pats her ass...and she returns the intimacy with a good firm squeeze of his nuts...he winces, then laughs.

RON watching, neutral.

HIS POV - the MANAGERESS intersecting MARIA ELENA at the foot of the stairs and telling her something and Maria Elena now looking over with something tired in her expression that says "Oh the para again"....now fixing a smile as she sees him.

RON seeing it and drawing the GIFT-WRAPPED PRESENT discreetly across the table and into his pocket, ashamed that he's gone too far as:

She is next to the table now, with a big smile.

MARIA
So - today we get married no?

RON
Sure, why not -

She plants a kiss on his cheek...his eyes.

MARIA
You want drink or we go fuckee fuckee now?

235. CONT.

RON
Uh...yeah....yeah, let's go -

EXT./INT. 2nd GUATEMALAN WHOREHOUSE - NIGHT (1970)

236. ANOTHER BAR - RON wheels down a row of GIRLS in a back COURTYARD, an expert now...NIGHT, a bizarre lighting setup in the courtyard coming from the ground up -

VOICES
(calling to him and fading as he passes)
Hey Meestah, you wanta suck my teetie....look this big teetie.

I fuck you good, come...

Hey 'merican, you taste my pussy ....is hot.

Hey guapo I geeve you blow job, you never have like this -

RON
(wheeling to a stop, at ONE GIRL, indicating with his head)
Okay.

A FACE, somewhat lost in shadow, clicks her shoe off the wall and makes her turn into a lighted doorway.

cut

INT. 2nd GUATEMALAN WHOREHOUSE - NIGHT (1970)

237. BRIEF GLIMPSE - THE GIRL, unseen, is using a blowdryer on RON's face...nipples, ears, scalp. His eyes closed, enjoying it....she clicks (FX) it off suddenly.

GIRL
(sharp)
Feenish.

RON
...more, keep going.

237. CONT.

GIRL
Dinero!

HE reaches into his pants.

cut

238. RON at his casa - DAY - drinking more mezcal as he tries to scrawl a postcard home. Unsatisfied, picks it up, looks at it - a sun and sea landscape - and tears it up. Starts on a fresh postcard. Forming the words: "Dear Folks...am fine...." stops again, as, during this, the VOICE from the other room.

VOICE
(slurring, crying)
Nina...Nina!....Nina!....NINA!

RON
(finally reacting)
Oh shit....

VOICE
Nina, Nina....

Exasperated, rolls now to the door of the bedroom.

239. OPENS it. Rolling in.

RON
SHUT UP WILLYA, JOE - JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP!

JOE, 20, is wallowing in his own filth in his bed, on his belly - bedsore holes the size of fists in his naked buttocks...bottles of liquor strewn around the bed, half-eaten food, cockroaches. Looking now at Ron. He has the most beautiful blue eyes, now watery, a wispy blond 'Ho Chi Minh' beard, and a body like a skeleton, obviously close to Death.

JOE
(in a weak but moving voice, obstinate)
Can you help me? Can you help me...Is that you - Ron?

RON
Why don't you go back to Dallas, Joe? Go back to the fucking VA.

Joe shakes his head semi-clear....'no....no way'.

239. CONT.

JOE
Where's Nina, Ron?

RON
Nina's gone. She won't come back, Joe!

JOE
(slobbering)
Nina? She wouldn't leave me.

240. RON rolls out of the room, shaking his head. Behind him:

VOICE
Ron, can you help me...Can you help me? Ron? Will you get somebody for me?

As RON departs the casa:

VOICE
Nina!.....Nina?

cut

241. RON, drunk, in another BAR, counting his dwindling cash.

ANOTHER ANGLE - reaches over and without even noticing it, empties the bottom of the mezcal bottle, worm and all, into his mouth. Looks around, barks at the BARTENDER.

RON
Mas!

VOICE
(yelling)
That goddamn fucking slut!

CHARLIE from the poker game, a sombrero on his head and a serape, rolls out from the curtains in the back, angry and drunk and hurt.

CHARLIE
I'm gonna kill dat hoor laughing at me.

RON
(recognizing him.)
Charlie! Hey Charlie -

CHARLIE intersecting RON, hardly recognizing him.

241. CONT.

CHARLIE
That bitch thinks it's funny I can't move my dick...Fuck you. Fuck all you dumb motherfuckahs! They made me kill babies man!

The beefy BARTENDER comes over.

BARTENDER
You don't like the place, get out.

CHARLIE
Fuck your syphilitic mother.

The BARTENDER grabs his chair and starts pushing him out hard as he makes futile gestures of protest.

RON
(following)
Hey - leave him alone! He's my friend! Hey!

CHARLIE
They made me kill babies!

cut

242. CHARLIE AND RON in the back seat of a battered taxicab moving along a dusty ROAD in the middle of a mesa.

CHARLIE
(still fuming)
That goddamn fucking slut.

RON
Fuck her. She ain't worth a shit.

CHARLIE
That fucking hoor, who the...
(to cabdriver)
Hey asshole - where the fuck you going? Canada?
(at Ron)
Look at that fucking meter, he's rigged the meter!

Lashes a slap up against the head of the CABDRIVER. The CABBIE curses in Spanish and:

cut

243. CHARLIE AND RON sit in their wheelchairs in the middle of nowhere, the sun setting red in the low hills of the mesa.

RON
You and your great ideas.

CHARLIE
Fuck 'em...fuck 'em all!

RON
(tired now)
Sure - yeah -

CHARLIE
They made me kill babies....

RON
Okay -

CHARLIE
Whaddaya mean 'okay' -

With no one else left to attack, he now rolls up angrily to Ron, his eyeballs starting out of his head.

CHARLIE
Whaddaya mean 'okay'? You ever kill a baby! You ever kill a baby? Did you?

ANOTHER ANGLE - spit spraying over RON's face as he stares surprised at his friend.

CHARLIE
Yeah, I didn't think so...I didn't think so. You're full of shit!

Ron realizing now what he is saying, his eyes growing small, intense.

ANOTHER ANGLE - CHARLIE, starts to pull away, a triumphant gleam in his eye.

CHARLIE
Yeah - you never looked at yourself in the fucking mirror. You're a scumbag!

RON ROLLS after him with one powerful heave of his shoulders - and smacks into the side of his chair, jumps up - and dumps him out on the ground.

RON
How do you know! How the fuck do you know what I did !

CHARLIE
(defiant)
Fuck you, you....

RON shoots out of his chair onto Charlie.

THEY roll in the dust, socking, wrestling, scratching, biting - drunk and ridiculous, in the middle of this vast empty landscape.

ANOTHER ANGLE - fighting. Half-curses. Ron getting the upper position as they drag their legs through the dust behind them.

RON
Who's a scumbag - who !

CHARLIE
(resilient)
You...you're a scumbag!

Ron hitting him....hitting him...

CHARLIE'S FACE - close, pain, hurt.

RON realizes what he's doing...his movements lessen, and lessen, and he stops, disqusted with himself.

cut

244. A BATTERED VEGETABLE TRUCK brakes to a stop on the road, and an amiable-looking GUATEMALAN gets out, puzzled at the toppled chairs looking over at

THE TWO FIGURES lying exhausted in the dust, side by side, still. CHARLIE looking up at the DRIVER motioning.

THE TRUCK DRIVER picking up one of the chairs.

RON - a mess, looking up through the dirt and scratches disfiguring him at the sky - sober.

CHARLIE
(off)
You okay?

RON
....yeah.

LONG SHOT - the DRIVER slamming the door of the truck. RON AND CHARLIE huddled together inside...and the TRUCK pulls out, framed by the hills.

MUSIC THEME -

245. RON in a BUS travelling - DAY cut

246. PAST THE TEXAS BORDER

247. DAY - riding past farm fields, down a road - now in a Greyhound Bus.

RON looking out.

PAST A ROAD SIGN - JESSOP, GEORGIA - POP: 9,091

248. RON wheeling off the BUS at the DEPOT - a spartan Main Street, agricultural community. He hesitates - almost ready to get back on the bus, which now departs.

249. RON riding in the back of a battered TAXI checking off an address on the back on an envelope. Looking out as the cab pulls up in a cloud of reddish dust towards

A FARMHOUSE isolated in red clay country, flat rolling hills. Some hanging cyperesses shading the yard. It is hot, muggy, a broken swing, delapidated porch, barn, peeling paint...

RON, with trepidation, getting out of the taxi as DOGS bark, off, paying the CABDRIVER who has come around to help him.

MONGRELS surrounding the wheelchair, increasingly agitated. A door creaks and slaps OFF and

250. MR. WILSON emerges from the house, curious, then shooing the dogs away. He is in his late 50's, a poor farmer, strong hands, sun-creased frame, deep rural accent, gentle.

MR. WILSON
Don't worry, they won't bite...Come on now, get away now, get yourselves away...they probably jes afraid of that chair there...

MRS. WILSON peeking through the screen door, holes in it, flies...a suspicious frown.

RON and MR. WILSON - the dogs have ceased barking, sniff around.

RON
Are you Mr. Wilson?

MR. WILSON
(a real friendly handshake)
Yeah, Bill Wilson...what can I do for you, son?

RON
I'm Ron Kovic and...I knew your son, Billy.

MR. WILSON
You knew Billy!

RON
In the war...in Vietnam

MR. WILSON
(lighting up)

Well, I'll be, come on in...
Carolyn, Jaimie! Come on
out here, we got a friend of
Billy's...let me help you now...
now how do you work this thing?

RON
Just grab the back, Mr. Wilson

MR. WILSON
Okay -

CAROLYN (MRS. WILSON) coming out the screen door, more confident, thin and somewhat gaunt...

MRS. WILSON (OFF)
Carolyn, this here is Ron...
friend of Billy's.

CAROLYN
Howdy Ron, pleased to meet you...

As behind her, suddenly, a YOUNGER WOMAN, in her early 20's, comes out with a LITTLE BOY, 3, following - a scared, almost dumb look on her face.

HER POV - RON coming towards the porch, looking at her.

MR. WILSON
(pushing Ron)
And that's Jaimie, Billy's wife...
and little Billie...this is Ron
Kovic, Jaimie...

cut

CAROLYN serving coffee, in the small LIVING ROOM to RON who is glancing through a photo album on his lap - flipping the pages politely ...

RON
Thank you...

MR. WILSON (OVER)
...it was some funeral.
Marine Honor Guard...

MR. WILSON sitting on the couch with the LITTLE BOY in his lap...JAIMIE in a chair, docile and retiring...the room is in part a musuem to Billy - his framed photographs, medals, certificates, a faded Marine flag on the wall...

MR. WILSON
...came down in their fancy uniforms, fired their rifles up into the sky, the drums were beating. Billy was the first boy killed in that war from Jesup. Gave him the...
(with awe)
silver star...He was only 19, Billy....

RON listening, tense, turning the photo album and his eyes falling on

A PHOTO OF BILLY in full combat gear, grenades, rifle, bandoliers - chest puffed out, a big grin, especially staged for his parents back home.

MR. WILSON (OVER)
....Billy wasn't the only one from Jesup. Course it was nothing

MR. WILSON

MR. WILSON
like the big war hundred years ago down here but there was ...Bruce - Bruce Crabtree... and Andy Henderson...

CAROLYN
(crossing over to the couch)
And the Rutledge boy...Lance

MR. WILSON
Yeah...Lance, nice boy

RON looking over at

JAIMIE looking at him.

MR. WILSON (OVER)
For the life of me, I still can't quite figger that war out...

RON looking back to MR. WILSON

MR. WILSON

MR. WILSON
...why we had to go all that danged way to fight it...
(glancing at Ron's wheelchair)
why's we had to lose all those young men. I can't figger that out - but we gotta proud tradition in this family. Billy's great grandfather, he was at First Bull Run, my pa was in France in '16 and I went over to the Pacific in '44...Hell we probably fought in every war this country ever had.

Fondling little BILLIE on his lap.

MR. WILSON
So an I reckon we're ready to do it again.

RON - about to speak,but sighs. Holds it. A pause.

MR. WILSON picking up the pause.

MR. WILSON
Course they never quite knew how it happend and all. There was this letter from his Lieutenant, I think it was...

RON

RON
Lieutenant Moore

MR. WILSON

MR. WILSON
That's right, Lieutenant Moore. And it said there was this real bad ambush one night. Told us Billy "distinguished" himself in the fighting. Told us Bill died real quick. That's good...he died real quick...

Another pause. Awkward. Mr. Wilson glancing at Mrs. Wilson,around at

JAIMIE

RON (OVER)
(slow)
I didn't really know him that well... he was new..in my squad...he...

CONT.

RON
...he was really brave..and he died like a real hero...and I sure wish I could...I could bring him back for you...

Chokes. A silence.

MR. AND MRS. WILSON

MR. WILSON
We sure understand Ron, we sure understand the pain you've been going through...

MRS. WILSON
Some more coffee Ron?

RON murmuring something under his breath, as she slips out of the room.

JAIMIE (OVER)
What was it like?...

JAIMIE - big staring eyes.

JAIMIE
....the moment he died?

RON looking at her, then sliding off.

RON
Oh...he stayed out there...fighting them off as we were pulling back - retreating? ...it was real dark and he was firing away the last I saw him... and they...they got him finally but he took a lot of them down with him, I can tell y9u that...Yeah. He took a lot down with him. He was really brave.

MR. WILSON - real soft and proud.

MR. WILSON
I'm jes so happy hearing that bout Billy. That's real nice to hear from you Ron.

RON looking from Mr. Wilson to

JAIMIE quiet.

cut

A WIND BLOWING - TWILIGHT. - A CEMETARY, hundreds of tombstones, most of them marked with Confederate flags indicating Civil War dead...RON sitting quietly in front of a grave, alone, meditative - traces of tears railroading down his cheeks.

TOMBSTONE marked "William Charles Wilson: Born 1948, Died 1967 - ' In Battle in the Republic of South Vietnam... In the Service of his Beloved Country'...a wind popping.

A BLACK CARETAKER ambles up a hillock towards him... in his 60's, wrinkled, curly white hair, yellow teeth, patched workclothes, a dog trailing him.

CARETAKER
Cemetary's closing son...Taxi's waiting, make that bus?

RON looks up, sees him. The dog sniffing him as

THE CARETAKER comes closer to the grave, glances at it, and walks on.

RON looks back at the grave a moment longer...then unlocks his brakes and

Executes an almost military-like right face in the chair and

SHARP OVERHEAD ANGLE - GRAVEYARD Featuring the expanse of tombs - as RON goes and light pipe and drum CHORDS come in....

RON wheeling past the TOMBSTONES - set soft to the MUSIC..."When Johnny comes marching home again - hurrah, hurrah..."

cut

MUSIC - BOOTS on pavement - NIGHT - CANDLES AND TORCHES....MOVING UP to:

A PIPER AND A DRUMMER AND NAOTHER YOUNG MAN carrying a U.S. flag with the stars and stripes sewn upside down on the cloth - all of them in Vietnam Veteran boots, fatigues, utilities, medals, the drummer wearing a symbolically bloodied bandage swatched across his forehead...FOLLOWED now by a candle-lit ragtime army of YOUNG PEOPLE, whistling in haunting rhythm to "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again" down a large MIAMI AVENUE - many of them women, many of them vets with bush hats, medals, long hair, beards, tough eyes, road tired. SPECTATORS on the sidewalk. SUPERIMPOSE TITLE:.

ONE YEAR LATE - THE REPUBLICAN
NATIONAL CONVENTION - MIAMI FLORIDA

The procession seems to part onto a moving island in its midst and RON and two other PARAS come into view...3 of them abreast in wheelchairs... in the honor position of the ragtime parade with a big banner - STOP THE WAR - VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR - strung over their heads - 'hurrah! hurrah! ' up.

SECRET SERVICE car trailing

COPS in full riot gear filing out of a TRUCK on a quiet street. STATIC of a walkie talkie - "5th and Cyprus:. SOUNDS OF the WHISTLING marchers in the distance.

DOCUMENTARY CLIP - EXTERIOR - THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION, 1972 - the DELEGATES crowding into the CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT.

THE INTERIOR OF THE CONVENTION - a roar of SOUND.

FOUR MORE YEARS. FOUR MORE YEARS.

As AGNEW comes to the podium to accept the nomination.

MASSIVE TRACKING SHOT through the DEMONSTRATORS outside the HALL - NIGHT featuring a strong 12 foot chain metal fence around it. Chanting:

STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR

A welling vibration of sound, gradually assuming the hypnotic proportions of a Zen hum.

To RON in the midst, in all his Marine medals and insignia, TIMMY and OTHER VETS bodyguarding him, as a 3-man national network CAMERA CREW films him, angry and passionate, under the heavy background SOUND, fringed by t by the other vets intermittently interrupting with cries of 'Right on! Right on!'

RON

WHY DO THEY WANT TO HIDE US?...Why won't they let us in there? Why won't they let the veterans of that war speak tonight? They don't wanna know, they don;t wanna see us, they hate that war, they wanna hide us, they've lied and cheated to us long enough but we're not gonna run away and hide anymore, we're going to take it to them because we LOVE this country. We love this country more than they could ever know. We fought for it, we gave our bodies because we loved it and believed in everything it stood for and tonight we're ashamed of it and we've come from all the little towns, thousands of us to get this country back again, to make it whole again. Truth, honesty, and integrity - this is the lost American dream here tonight, and mister we're gonna take it back!

Exclamations of support from the VETS.

CLIP - THE CONVENTION CROWD, chanting, "Agnew in Seventy-Six!" Many of them young in summer suits, women in light elegant dresses.

CLIP - AGNEW speaking.

AGNEW
..."Should we continue to be a world power and exercise the international responsibilities that we assumed at the end of World War II? Or do we ignore the lessons of history, retreat into isolationism, abandon our allies and concentrate wholly on our internal affairs at the great expense of our national security?"

RIOT COPS forming a line.

RON - INTO CAMERA CLOSE

RON
We're never gonna let the people of the United States forget that war, because the moment we do, there's gonna be another war and another war and another, that's why we're gonna be there for the rest of our lives telling you that war happened, it just wasn't some nightmare, it happened ladies and gentlemen and you're not gonna sweep it under the rug because you didn't like the ratings like some goddam television show cause we're gonna be there sticking our heads up out of the garbage and screaming hot pokers up your ass. We - all of us here.

Indicating

THE VETS gathered round him.

RON (OVER)
are the living death
the reminder of that war

RON slapping his wheelchair -

RON
and this wheelchair...this steel is your memorial day on wheels and I'm your yankee doodle dandy, American I'm your john wayne come home your fourth of july firecracker exploding in your grave!.....

CONT.

Breaks off. STARES into CAMERA. A strong beat.

REPORTER, moved now turning quickly to his CAMERA. A hint of shocked silence in his voice.

REPORTER
This is Roger Mudd outside the convention hall with Ron Kovic, a disabled Vietnam veteran protesting President...

CLIP - AGNEW -....ROARS from the CROWD. The BAND breaks into "Yankee Doodle Dandy".

GAS GRENADES burst. DEMONSTRATERS tear out, one of them over the roof of an empty police car. COPS chasing them - the beginnings of a rumble.

TWO VETS running up, to RON, TIMMY, OTHERS.

VET 1
They got Boyle and Jenkins! They're arresting everybody!

RON
Where?

VET 1
Collins Avenue, Frontal attack. Gas Grenades. Beating people.

VET 2
They got us pinned in at Cyprus too!

RON
We gotta hold. We gotta hold. Slow em down. Fight back. This is it...tonight!

266. CONT.

Spotting someone off, ROLLS out -

RON
Chuck!....Chuck!

A REPORTER hurrying by, RON cutting him off.

RON
You gotta get me in there.

TIMMY hurrying up with OTHERS. Chuck is unsure, nervous.

CHUCK
I thought McCloskey got you the passes.

RON
(forget it)
Long story...I gotta get in there, Chuck, if there's one thing I do tonight, I gotta get in there!

OTHERS
C'mon man - get 'im in there. Don't fuck around. You owe us, man!

CHUCK
Okay, okay - but just you. Nobody else. And once you're in....

RON
(rolling already)
Yeah -

267. RON AND CHUCK approaching the GATE in the chain link fence 50 yards away.

CHUCK
You go in there, you'll get killed Kovic.

RON - close. Tension. SOUND dropping in background.

HIS POV - the CONVENTION HALL looming like the enemy in a jungle 6000 miles away- No sound now in background. A moment. Then FULL SOUND as

SINGLE - CHUCK showing a pass to the GUARD, gesturing authoritatively at RON, the Guard nodding, Ron going through the gate with Chuck.

267. CONT.

RON, his back to us, wheels with CHUCK down an OUTER HALLWAY of the convention. Behind those doors, a monstrous rumble of sound.

RON through a DOOR - into the ocean of SOUND.

268. CLIP - INSIDE THE CONVENTION HALL -

FOUR MORE YEARS FOUR MORE YEARS

269. CLIP - NIXON now coming to the podium, a huge smile. A pause. Then stretches his arms with his hands in a V - and doves fly out of his armpits.

270. TRACKING RON as he gets closer and closer...down the AISLE, like an assassin - past women dancing and jumping up and down in the throes of political orgasm.

271. CLIP - NIXON

NIXON
Mr. Chairman, delegates to this convention, my fellow Americans. Four years ago, standing in this very place, I proudly accepted your nomination for President of the United States.

Roars.

272. TRACKING RON.

273. CLIP - NIXON

NIXON
...Tonight I again proudly accept your nomination for President of the United States.

Greater ROARS -

Nixon pausing to speak in the lull. OFF - "STOP THE BOMBING! STOP THE WAR!" can be heard - clear, one voice yelling with all its strength.

274. RON yelling

STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR
STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR

Looking directly at Nixon.

275. CLIP - NIXON reacting momentarily to the disturbance OFF - then going on with his speech.

276. SECRET SERVICE AGENTS throwing up their arms, trying to block the cameras, converge on RON.

ANOTHER ANGLE - yanking his chair around. RON locking his brakes and yelling

STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR

Looking now for the T.V. cameras upstairs.

AGENT 1
Get 'im outta here! Now!

TWO AGENTS pulling at the handles, but they're braked and the chair won't give. Heaving with all their strength, they start jerking him back, bouncing him awkwardly.

AGENT 2
Where are the fucking brakes on this thing!

AGENT 1
(worried, looking for cameras)
Get 'im outta here, get 'im outta here!

277. T.V. NEWSMAN, nationally known, is up in the camera booth above the hall.

NEWSMAN
(addressing camera)
There seems to be some kind of disturbance down on the Convention floor...We're trying -

278. AGENT 1

AGENT 1
Pick him up! Pick him up!

RON
STOP THE BOMBING STOP THE WAR

279. T.V. MONITOR - RON being lifted in his chair by FOUR AGENTS who hurry him down the aisle.

NEWSMAN (OVER)
...Ron Kovic, disabled veteran
(MORE)

279. CONT.

NEWSMAN (OVER contd)
protesting the war in Vietnam. We're gonna try to get a mike down there and....

280. RON in the midst of the FOUR AGENTS, yelling

RON
Is this how they treat wounded veterans! What are you doing! What kinda country is this!

T.V. MAN and SOUNDMAN now following.

PAST PEOPLE in the CROWD holding their noses and motioning him out with their arms - get him outta here!

RON

RON
Why won't you people listen to me! Why are the men who've fought for this country being GASSED AND BEATEN in the streets outside! Why won't you listen to them - why!

A MAN runs up out of the crowd and SPITS in his face,

MAN
Traitor!.....SCUM!

An AGENT blocks him off as RON thrashes trying to speak to the T.V. CREW following.

RON
Is that what we get? Spit in the face! I've got just as much right to be here as any of these delegates. I FOUGHT FOR THAT RIGHT! I gave three quarters of my body for...

RON taken out of the hall - as NIXON speaks OVER.

281. RON being wheeled out past the GATE in the fence. Confusion in the streets all around.

AGENT 2
Get the car, get the car!

281. CONT.

RON
What's going on, what the fuck's going on!

AGENT 1
Book him...you're under arrest

RON
Bullshit! I'm a Vietnam Veteran. I have a right to

AGENT 1
You shoulda died over there
(to AGENT 2)
I'd like to take this creep and throw him off the roof!

RON
(turning fast in his chair)
Who the fuck are you!

And BUSTS him right in the mouth. AGENT 1 going down, stunned.

AGENT 2 - shocked, disbelieving...then moves, grabbing the handles and DUMPING RON out of his chair

AGENT 2
(livid)
You....!

RON smashing face first into the pavement.

LOW ANGLE - AGENT 2 following with his knee thrust forward. FX - smashing into RON'S broken spine. RON rising up in sharp foreground with a grimace and a SCREAM.

AGENT 2 is freaking, hitting him like he was a normal adversary - RON his legs twisted awkwardly underneath him, thrashing, trying to fight back.

282. TIMMY and ANOTHER VET trying to get to RON through GAS, EXPLOSIONS. COPS in background fighting with the VETS.

283. AGENT 2, feeling his broken teeth and the blood from his mouth, staggers forward and

KICKS RON....again....again....

284. TIMMY running - past a VET going by with another VET slung over his shoulders in the classic war position,

284. CONT.

escaping the candlelit gas fumes of the holocaust.... men coughing, gagging, it looks like war

TIMMY
KOVIC'S GETTING BEATEN! LET'S GO! HELP HIM!

THE OTHER VET repeating it - OTHER VETS joining them.

285. CLOSE - RON blood all over his face, grabbed viciously by the hair and pulled upwards - by AGENT 2

AGENT 3
Chief - cameras!

A CAMERA CREW running up -

AGENT 1 bleeding

AGENT 1
Get them outta here, get them outta here!

286. THE SECRET SERVICE SEDAN rolls up, red light revolving on its hood.

287. RON being jerked belly down across the cement. HANDS raking his medals off his chest, pushed, shoved.

AGENT 1 VOICE
Get 'im in the car, get 'im in the car - hurry up!

T.V. CAMERA CREW filming as TWO AGENTS run up, try to block them with their arms.

RON being pulled towards the open door of the back seat. His legs flopping, thrashing underneath as they prop him up by the shoulders, like a dummy.

AGENT 1
That's it....let's go!

A YELL OFF and

TIMMY AND HALF A DOZEN VETS converge on the AGENTS in a wild charge, tackling them head on -- surging over them before they can draw their guns -- BEATING THEM without mercy.

A BIG BLACK VET jerks AGENT 2 off RON

287. CONT.

AGENT 2
(surprised)
What the...!

The VET rams him hard into the sedan; he SCREAMS and collapses. The VET turns back to RON as TIMMY runs up.

TIMMY
Ron?

RON
Get me my chair! Get me my chair.

Timmy looking for the chair.

BLACK VET
Easy babe, easy

RON
I'm okay. I'm okay.

His face a mask of blood, slurring his words through puffed lips -

RON
Where's the cameras?....Get them over here.

Spitting out a broken tooth.

VET
(running off)
Hey!

RON
'Show these motherfuckers.

CAMERA CREW running in closer.

TIMMY helping RON into his chair....in extreme pain, he controls the spasm, then:

RON
Okay let's go.

288. Timmy wheeling him as -

HE bypasses the OTHER VETS

RON
(motioning to them)
Let's go - let's go...one more time.

288. THREE VETS - amazed at him, moved by him, fall in behind.

289. A PHALANX OF COPS forming for the final charge down the street, sticks at the ready, gas fumes drifting away in the night.

290. MORE VETS falling in abreast and behind RON - more and more. Sticks, bottles, improvised weapons. MUSIC THEME up strong.

CAMERA walking backwards as the CREW films RON wheeling himself at the head of an army of men - a cop stick clutched in his hand, blood all over him.

THE COPS moving forward as one...faces unseen in their riot helmets.

BULLHORN (OVER)
You are ordered to disperse.
You are in unlawful assembly.
You have thirty seconds to disperse.

RON AND THE VETS moving forward against them, without a single break in the ranks.

RON
Spread it out! Spread it out!

THE COPS MOVING - an overwhelming force. Tension.

THE LINE OF VETS - MOVING

RON at the center, out in front, his eyes intent on the cops - ROLLING

RON
Keep going, keep going.

The would won back in all its glory

THE T.V. CREW filming from the side as RON AND HIS ARMY swing past CAMERA - and on into the breach.

POSTSCRIPT CRAWL:

RON KOVIC OFFICIALLY ADDRESSED
THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION
IN 1976, AND IS NOW LIVING AND WRITING
IN SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA.

The End.